TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

This Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) has been prepared at the request of the City of Fremont for a project affecting the former Office of Dr. Grau, located at 37275 Niles Boulevard in the Niles district of Fremont **(Figure 1)**. The building is located on Assessor's Parcel Number 507-285-012, a lot measuring 50' x 149' near the southwestern corner of Niles Boulevard and "G" Street. The property consists of a one-story office building with residential units in the rear designed by acclaimed Bay Region modernist architect William Wurster and constructed in 1941 for Doctor Eugene C. Grau. The building is situated on the northeastern corner of the lot, and the rest of the parcel is occupied by surface parking and a small fenced garden area to the rear of the building. The City of Fremont is exploring the possibility of constructing a new fire station adjacent to the former Grau property on the vacant parcel at 37299 Niles Boulevard. This report includes a detailed description and history of the Office of Dr. Grau, an analysis of the building's eligibility for the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and an evaluation of the proposed project under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

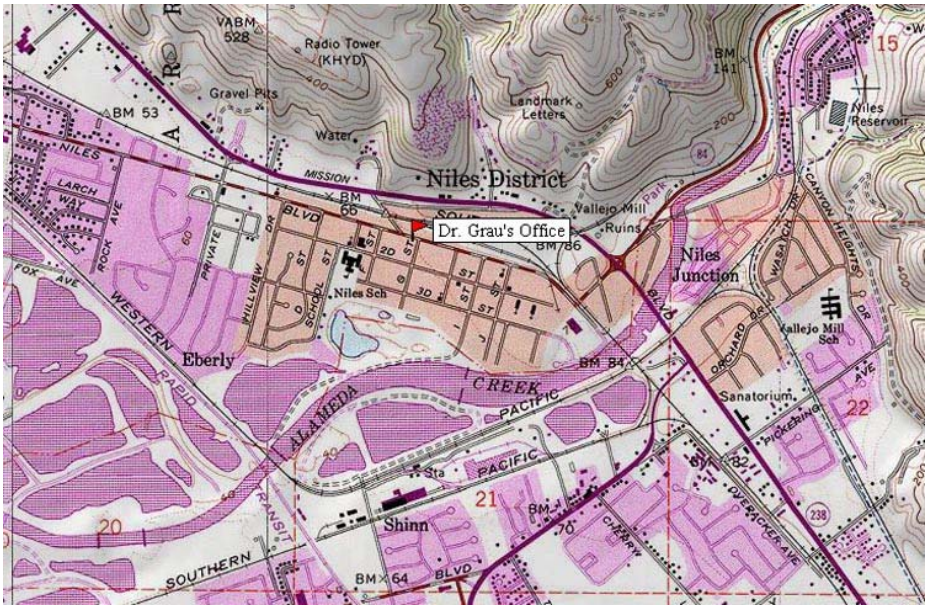

Figure 1. USGS map showing location of the Office of Dr. Grau at 37275 Niles Boulevard/APN 507-285-012. (Note: north is up.)

II. CURRENT HISTORIC STATUS

This section examines the national, state, and local historical ratings assigned to The Office of Dr. Grau.

A. California Historic Resources Information System

According to the California Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS), the subject property has a California Historic Resource Status Code (Status Code) of "7," as a property within the boundaries of the "Niles Old Town Complex," a historic district documented by the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation in April 1974.[1] According to the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) a Status Code of 7 means that the property has "not been evaluated for National Register or California Register or needs Revaluation." According to the sketch map accompanying the documentation, the property is a contributing element to the district, as part of the former site of Essanay Studios, which occupied much of the block bounded by Niles Boulevard (First Street), "G" Street, Second Street and "F" Street between 1912 and 1933, when the studio was demolished. There is also a separate listing in CHRIS for the "Essanay Studio Complex" on Niles Boulevard. Although no address is listed, it is assumed that this historic district refers to the existing bungalows built by Essanay for its actors on the north side of Second Street, immediately to the south of the subject property. With no surviving structures associated with Essanay's occupation of the site remaining on the subject property, it is doubtful that it is part of this district.

B. City of Fremont

The Office of Dr. Grau at 37275 Niles Boulevard is located within a Community-Commercial zoning district that encompasses both sides of Niles Boulevard between "F" Street to the west and the former Schuckl Cannery property to the east. It is also located within the Niles Redevelopment Project Area and within the boundaries of the Niles Historic Overlay District.

Niles has been the subject of a historic resources survey in recent years. Undertaken by consultants retained by the City of Fremont, the survey activity has been largely reconnaissance in nature, meaning that most properties have only been visually assessed with selected properties earmarked for further research. According to the map prepared by consultants Michael Corbett, Woody Minor and Ward Hill, The Office of Dr. Grau at 37275 Niles Boulevard was assigned a notation of

[1] According to the Historic Property Data File, the Niles Old Town Complex, of which 37275 Niles Boulevard is a part, is recorded under the primary number of 01-003280.

"E1C(1956)M." According to the methodology of the consultants, the notation is decoded as follows:

> "E" means that the property has "environmental" or contextual significance within its immediate locale;
>
> "1" means that the building is a single story structure;
>
> "C" means that the use of the building is commercial;
>
> "1956" is the estimated date of construction;
>
> and "M" indicates that the style of the building on the site is "Modern."

The consultants proposed the establishment of two historic districts in Niles: the "Niles Historic Commercial District" and the "Niles Historic Residential District." The subject property is not located in either of the proposed historic districts.

III. DESCRIPTION

A. Site

The Office of Dr. Grau is located at 37275 Niles Boulevard, on a level parcel on the south side of Niles Boulevard (formerly First Street), between "F" and "G" Streets. The parcel consists of two merged lots with overall dimensions of 50' x 149' **(Figure 2)**. The lot is generally level, with a slight increase in grade occurring approximately 25' from the northern edge of the lot. The existing building's footprint, which measures roughly, 30' x 68', occupies only about one third of the parcel's total square footage, with the majority of the remainder devoted to surface parking. The building occupies the northeastern corner of the parcel and a gravel driveway occupies the northwestern corner. The driveway provides vehicular access to the rear of the parcel, which is also surfaced with gravel. A small garden enclosed behind a plank fence is located to the rear of the building. The parcel is bounded by a wood plank fence and plantings (including agave) to the south and west and a chain link metal fence to the east. The northern boundary is a sidewalk facing Niles Boulevard. The parcel to the east is vacant, whereas the parcels to the south are occupied by Craftsman bungalows built by Essanay Studios ca. 1912. The property to the west contains a 1950s-era apartment building.

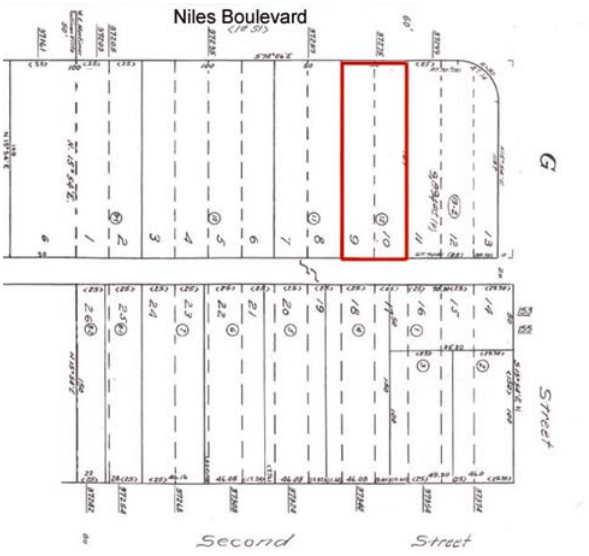

Figure 2. Alameda County Assessor's Parcel Map showing location of the Office of Dr. Grau

B. Exterior

The Office of Dr. Grau is a one-story, L-shaped structure with the narrow end of the building facing Niles Boulevard to the north. The structure is of wood-frame construction on a reinforced-concrete perimeter foundation. Galvanized iron vents puncture the foundation around the perimeter of the building and sheet metal gutters and leaders punctuate the walls. The flat roof is clad in tar and gravel, and according to the original building specifications, it was built to carry a future second floor, which was never constructed. Vent pipes, an antenna, and a satellite dish sit on the roof. The front, northern portion of the building was originally used as the office and clinic, while the rear portion contained a small studio apartment. The front, northern block of the building has a parapet wall which extends above the height of the roofline; the rear, southern block has a narrower footprint and

is offset slightly to the east of the central axis of the main block. The two different blocks originally corresponded with the interior uses, with the larger northern block housing the office and clinic and the rear block containing the residential unit. The building has wood sash in a variety of forms including hopper, awning and fixed; window lights of clear and obscure glass; and interior mesh bronze screens in wood sash in some windows. The exterior doors are solid core wood with a veneer of Philippine mahogany. The sole exception is a replacement door on the west façade. The hardware on the doors consists of round doorknobs, metal escutcheons and square metal wickets on some of the doors.

North Façade

The north façade of the Office of Dr. Grau faces Niles Boulevard **(Figure 3)**. It exhibits the primary character-defining feature of the building: a double row of windows extending across the north façade and wrapping around the northeast corner, sheltered by a broad cantilevered canopy. The window framing extends out from the plane of the north wall and at the northeast corner, and the windows and the wall supporting the windows extend further west than the wall above the windows, creating a bay window. The sash in this band of windows is a combination of fixed and hopper sash with obscure glass in the lower windows and clear glass in the upper windows. The orginal design indicates that this fenestration band was to be canted outward at the top **(Figure 4)**. Later revisions to

Figure 3. North façade

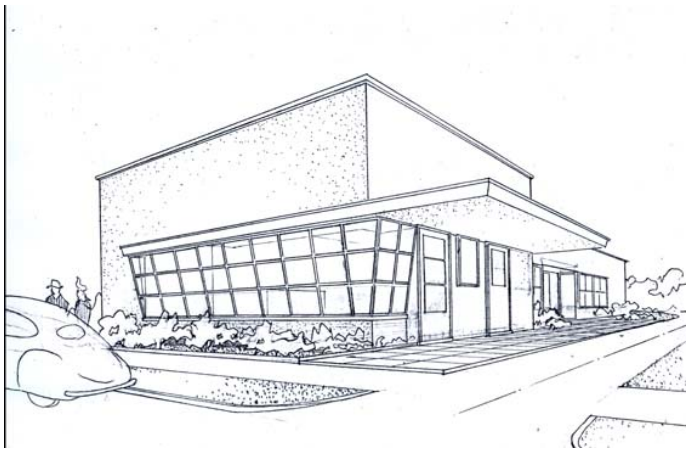

Figure 4. Perspective of the Office of Dr. Grau, February 1941. From William Wurster Collection, University of California Environmental Design Archives

the working drawings eliminated this feature. The balance of the façade is clad in metal lath covered in stucco painted gray. The wood and elements, including the sash and parapet coping, are painted gray-blue. The original specifications indicated that the exterior was to be painted white.

West Façade

The west façade is the most heavily fenestrated elevation of the Office of Dr. Grau **(Figure 5)**. It is also the location of the four principal entryways. In the main block there are two doors located toward the front of the building which originally provided access to the reception and emergency rooms. In the rear block there are two doors recessed within an alcove that face each other across a small paved patio. These doors originally provided access to the recovery room and the apartment and currently access the two residential units at the rear of the building. The doorways are connected by a sloped concrete ramp that runs along the entire west façade, which was originally designed to allow gurneys to be rolled into the building. The two northernmost doors are sheltered by the cantilevered canopy which extends around the northeast corner of the building. A narrow clerestory window containing three fixed lights sits above the canopy. The remaining windows on the west façade consist of fixed and awning sash with clear and obscure glass.

Figure 5. West façade

Figure 6. East façade

South Façade

The south façade is somewhat obscured by a fence and heavy vegetation. Openings consist of a door leading to the residential unit and a small square single-light sash fitted with obscure glass.

East Façade

The long east façade is mostly unadorned and the rear section is completely obscured by vegetation **(Figure 6)**. Fenestration on this façade is a combination of awning and fixed sash fitted with clear and obscure glass. The defining element is a square bay window on the northern part of the east façade containing a double row of windows and sheltered by a cantilivered canopy. A pair of windows to the south of the bay window were added after construction to provide light to the bedroom in Apartment C, which was originally the x-ray room. A door located approximately in the center of the east façade, leading to the heating room, was also added at a later date.

C. Interior

The Office of Dr. Grau was originally separated into two main parts: the front part of the building containing the office and clinic, and the rear containing a small residential unit **(Figure 7)**. The office and clinic section contained the following rooms: reception, examination, consultation, emergency, recovery, lab, x-ray, dark room, a toilet room and a hall that contained an alcove for the secretary.

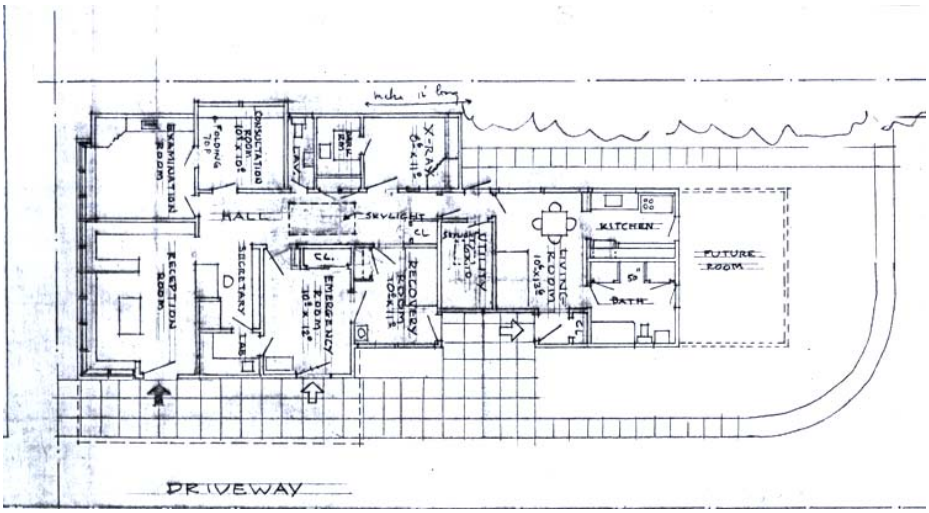

Figure 7. Original floor plan for the Office of Dr. Grau, 1941.
Some alterations were made to this plan prior to the start of construction.
From William Wurster Collection, University of California Environmental Design Archives

The apartment consisted of a living room, kitchen, and bathroom. The utility room, which contained the building's furnace and mechanical systems, was accessed through the rear hall down three stairs.

The office and clinic section were separated from the apartment by a recessed alcove on the west façade. Direct access between the two sections was achieved through a door that connected the rear hall of the office and clinic with the living room of the apartment.

At some point, the rear section of the clinic and office, including the recovery room, x-ray room and dark room, were remodeled into a second residential unit. As it is currently configured, the Office of Dr. Grau contains an office and two residential units (Apartments C and D). The office portion contains four offices (previously the reception, examination, consultation, and emergency rooms), a toilet room, and a kitchen (previously the laboratory). Apartment C, which is located in the central part of the building, contains a living room (previously the recovery room), a kitchen (previously the rear hall), a bedroom (previously the x-ray room), and a bathroom (previously the dark room). Apartment D corresponds to the original residential unit planned for this part of the building and its plan remains unchanged. The utility room, accessible from a door in the east façade, is located between Apartments C and D. Despite the change of use, the interior of the Office of Dr. Grau has not undergone considerable change. The most substantial alterations consist of closing off the south end of the hall in the office to limit direct access to Apartment C and the infilling of a door in the rear wall of Apartment C, limiting direct access between Apartments C and D.

Figure 8. General view of the interior of the Office of Dr. Grau, looking north from hall

The interior of the Office of Dr. Grau is finished very simply and inexpensively, as is typical of Wurster's designs of the period **(Figure 8)**. The interior features plaster walls and ceilings, carpeted or linoleum floors, plain wood wainscoting, wood casework with metal hardware, wood sash and doors, and wood thresholds. The floors in the bathrooms and kitchens have had their original linoleum replaced with new linoleum. Most other rooms originally had linoleum floors. It is not known if these still exist beneath the carpeting. The hardwood floor in the living room of Apartment D is also intact under the carpeting. Some of the original oak thresholds have been replaced with metal thresholds. The original wood sash and steel hardware are largely intact, although some

hardware and glass have been replaced over time. In addition, many of the sash are in bad condition, with evidence of dry and wet rot. The doors are largely intact and some remain in their original unpainted condition. The light fixtures throughout the building are not original with the exception of the fixtures in the bathroom and kitchen in Apartment D. While some original plumbing fixtures remain, particularly in the office and clinic section, most fixtures have been replaced in the residential units. Most casework and mechanical equipment appears to be original.

The main focus of the interior of the Office of Dr. Grau is the reception room, currently used as an office **(Figure 9)**. Wurster oriented the windows to direct the focus of its occupants to the dramatic landscape of the hills above Niles. This deliberate linking of indoor and outdoor spaces was one of the hallmarks of Wurster's design strategy. The large opening between the reception room and secretary's area and the hall is situated so that natural light and glimpses of scenery can penetrate the interior of the building. The lower half of the window band is infilled with "Western Rough" obscure glass to provide privacy from traffic on Niles Boulevard, while the upper level contains clear glass to provide an unobstructed view of the hills. The soffit above the windows is dropped to direct the view outwards instead of upwards. A very large, varnished solid wood pocket door can be pulled out to separate the reception room from the remainder of the office.

Figure 9. Reception room, looking northwest

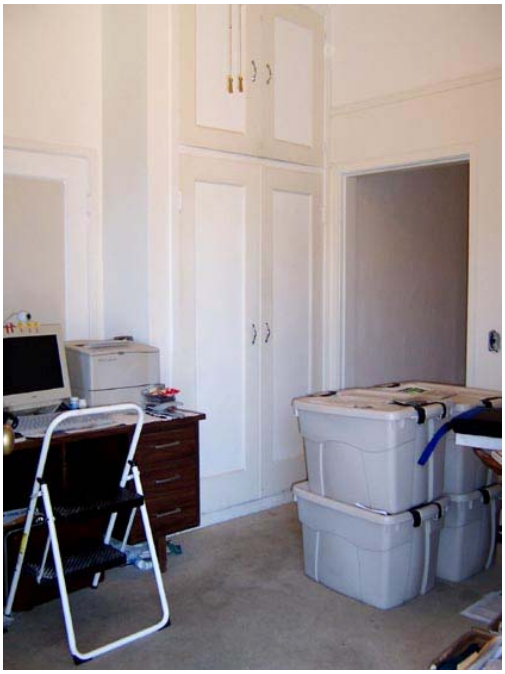

Figure 10. Built-in closets in Apartment C

The other rooms in the office and clinic were

designed for specific functions. Rooms that required privacy or negligible light, such as the emergency room, x-ray room, and dark room, were minimally fenestrated and utilitarian in finish. The residential spaces and public offices were designed to take advantage of natural light as much as possible, with large windows and overhead skylights. Built-in storage was provided throughout the building and remains largely intact, including the cabinets and hardware in the former laboratory and kitchen as well as closets in Apartment C and D **(Figure 10)**. Original sinks remain in the lab, rear hall, and apartment kitchen. The above-door light fixtures that were part of the original paging system are still present; the original system was set up so that if a patient rang the buzzer, these lights would illuminate until the page was answered **(Figure 11)**. Other original features include "Lumiline" light fixtures in Apartment D **(Figure 12)**, the light box for the x-ray illuminator and a "West Wind Speed Control" fan and dial in the x-ray room (now bedroom in Apartment C), some original chrome and porcelain switch plates and sockets, brass hardware on the interior doors, wood counters and backboard in the Apartment D kitchen **(Figure 13)**, closet rods and hooks, and heating vents.

Figure 11. Overhead paging fixture

Figure 12. "Lumaline" fixture in Apartment D

Figure 13. Kitchen cabinets and backsplash in Apartment D

IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT

A. Native American Period

Prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the San Francisco Bay Area was inhabited by peoples the Spanish originally called *Costeños* or "coast dwellers." Today, Ohlone is the preferred term for the people who shared a related language and culture and who made their homes around San Francisco Bay and along the coast from Monterey to the Golden Gate. The Ohlone are divided into approximately forty tribelets, each of which ranged in size from one hundred to two hundred and fifty members. The Ohlone were hunter-gatherers who subsisted on the abundant native plants and animals that once thrived in the foothills, arroyos and tidal marshes of San Francisco Bay. The mainstays of the Ohlone diet included shellfish; acorns, which were ground up into meal; nuts, seeds and berries; as well as game including deer, elk and bear. The Ohlone were skilled artisans, manufacturing grinders, pestles, metates, scrapers, drills, knives and arrow points from local and imported stone. Tules and various reeds were used to weave baskets and fabricate dwellings.

Based on modern archeological sources and contemporary Spanish accounts, it seems that several hundred Ohlone lived in villages situated along creeks and sloughs in what is now southwestern Alameda County, making their homes along creek terraces and the historic margin of bay tidal marshland. Discoveries of large shell middens along the banks of Alameda, Dry, Agua Caliente, Mission, Agua Fria and Lone Tree Creeks, as well as along the sloughs of the Bay marshlands, have confirmed the locations of these permanent settlements. The inhabitants of these settlements used rush canoes to travel along the creeks to fish, hunt, gather nuts and berries, and harvest abalone, mussels and salt. According to anthropologist Richard Levy, the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone lived in the vicinity of what is now Niles.

B. Spanish Period

The first Europeans to visit what is now the Niles district of Fremont were Spaniards who arrived in 1772 with the Fages-Crespi expedition. They were followed within a few years by the Juan Bautista expedition of 1776. Nevertheless, it would be another two decades before a permanent Spanish settlement was established in the vicinity of what is now Niles. This occurred on June 11, 1797, with the founding of Misión del Gloriosíssimo Patriarca San José by Padre Fermin Lasuén. The mission was constructed adjacent to an Ohlone Village called Oroysom. Mission San José, as it is usually

called, was the fourteenth of twenty-one Spanish missions founded in Alta California between San Diego and Sonoma.[2] It is located in the Mission San José district of Fremont, approximately two miles from Niles. What is now Niles was part of the lands belonging to the mission. The European presence in what is now Niles was fairly minimal during the Spanish Period, although a Spanish trail following the path of what is now Mission Boulevard ran through the area.

The Ohlone living in the vicinity of Niles were moved to Mission San José where many were converted to Catholicism and taught the ways of their Spanish rulers. The Ohlone were also put to work as vaqueros, leather workers, field hands and artisans, taking part in all of the economic activities at Mission San José. The combination of exogenous diseases to which the Ohlone had no immunity, as well as the psychological toll of having their culture suppressed, led to astoundingly high mortality rates at Mission San José.

C. Mexican Period

In 1821 Mexico won independence from Spain after a bitter war of devolution. The remote Spanish territory of Alta California became a Mexican province and Mexican authority was gradually established. During the 1820s and 1830s, wealthy descendents of Spanish settlers, known as Californios, and Mexican soldiers established dominion over large swaths of California. Increasingly, the mission padres found themselves pressured to relinquish their lands to the Californios. In 1834, the Mexican government officially "secularized" the missions of Alta California, supposedly so that the surviving Indians could purchase the ex-mission lands and become ranchers. The reality was quite different as Mexican governors such as Juan Bautista Alvarado appropriated the ex-mission lands and gave them to their powerful cronies. In 1836, Governor Alvarado appointed José de Jesus Vallejo *comisando,* or administrator of Mission San José. Within two years, Vallejo formally petitioned his friend, the governor, for 20,000 acres of ex-mission lands, which he already effectively occupied.[3]

Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda

For several years Vallejo was unsuccessful in his efforts to gain title to the lands he occupied, facing considerable resistance from Padre Muro at Mission San José, an advocate for the Ohlone still residing at the mission. Ultimately in 1842, Vallejo obtained title to 17,705 acres of some of the best ex-mission lands. Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda, as Vallejo's ranch was called, extended from Alameda Creek northwest to Arroyo Alto and then southwest to San Francisco Bay. Rancho Arroyo

[2] John S. Sandoval, *The History of Washington Township* (Fremont, CA: Mt. Eden Historical Publishers, 1985), 17.
[3] Ibid., 38.

de la Alameda encompassed all of what is the Niles district of Fremont.[4] In 1841, Vallejo built a flourmill on Alameda Creek where it emerges from Niles Canyon. In addition to running about 4,000 head of cattle on the ranch, Vallejo raised Arabian stock horses, which were prized by officers of the Mexican army.[5] Elsewhere on his ranch, Vallejo built adobe dwellings for his vaqueros, including a substantial adobe for his major-domo, Francisco Palemus.[6] This adobe, now called the "Old Adobe," still exists (albeit heavily restored) on the grounds of the California Nursery Historical Park.

D. Early American Period

In 1848, California was acquired by the United States by the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and on September 9, 1850 it was admitted to the Union as the thirty-first state. The American conquest of California had been preceded by a gradual incursion of American settlers into the former Mexican province and by the time the Mexican-American War broke out, American-born residents comprised a significant portion of California's population. After the Gold Rush, the American population exploded with settlers coming by ship and overland to make their fortunes in the Golden State. In 1853, three years after statehood, Alameda County was created out of sections carved out of Contra Costa and Santa Clara Counties. Alameda County was then divided into six townships: Brooklyn (now Oakland), Alameda, Eden, Murray and Washington. Washington Township contained six small settlements, including a tiny cluster of adobes around Vallejo's flourmill at the mouth of Niles Canyon.[7] The site of the village, then called Vallejo Mills, was situated on both sides of what is now Sycamore Street in what is now known as "Old Niles."

Early American Settlers

American settlers began to arrive in what is now Niles in substantial numbers during the early 1850s. Some of the earliest include the Shinn and Overacker families. The rich alluvial soils, abundant sunshine and convenient year-round water supply from Alameda Creek encouraged the production of high value specialty crops by these American pioneers. However, the influx of American settlers posed a severe challenge to the Californio ranchers. Time-consuming legal efforts necessary to evict squatters and prove title to his vast land holdings forced José de Jesus Vallejo to borrow money to pay his lawyers' fees. Although the U.S. Land Commission did eventually confirm his patent in 1858, Vallejo found himself mortgaged to the hilt after years of litigation. In 1862, Alameda County sued

[4] The Official Historical Atlas Map of Alameda County, California (Oakland: Thompson & West, 1878), 26.
[5] Sandoval, 39.
[6] Archaeological/Historical Consultants, Archaeological Survey Report: Widening of Mission Boulevard in Hayward, Union City and Fremont (Oakland: 1992 & 1994), 10-11.
[7] Thompson & West, Official and Historical Atlas of Alameda County, Oakland, CA (Reprinted by Valley Publishers, Fresno, 1976).

Vallejo for non-payment of taxes. Vallejo borrowed $100,000 from San Francisco businessman Jonas (sometimes spelled "Jonah") Clark to pay the taxes.[8] Within a year, Vallejo defaulted and Clark took title to 11,148 acres of rich alluvial land including all of what is now Niles.[9] Overnight, Clark became the largest landholder in the area.

Railroads

By the early 1860s, four Sacramento businessmen began conspiring to construct a railroad between Chicago and California, forever ending the state's isolation and increasing the value of its land and exports. The "Big Four"—Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington and Charles Crocker—organized the Central Pacific Railroad in April 1861 to build the western portion of what became known as the Transcontinental Railroad. Construction began in Sacramento in January 1863 and the railroad was completed six years later when the Central Pacific met their rival, the Union Pacific, at Promontory Point, Utah on May 10, 1869.

Initially, the western terminus of the Transcontinental Railroad was to be Sacramento. At Sacramento, westbound trains would be placed on barges that would complete the last leg of the journey to San Francisco. Even before the Transcontinental Railroad was complete, competitors of the Central Pacific began planning a line from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, thereby providing a direct rail connection between San Francisco and the rest of the nation. In 1864, the Western Pacific Railroad, organized by Timothy Dane, Charles McLaughlin and several other investors, identified what is now called Niles Canyon as the logical route through the East Bay hills from Sacramento to the terminus of the already completed San Francisco & San Jose Railroad in San Jose. From San Jose, trains would use existing tracks to take passengers and goods directly to San Francisco.[10] Construction of the line began in 1865, and by 1866, the first twenty miles between San Jose and Niles Canyon had been completed. Progress slowed to a crawl when the predominantly Chinese workforce reached Niles Canyon. Extensive blasting, necessary to carve a trackbed from the steep walls of the canyon, was time-consuming and the expense of the work soon caused the insufficiently funded railroad to get into trouble.[11]

[8] Basin Research Associates, *Historic Recordation Report,* "Kraftile, Fremont, California" (August 1998), 3.
[9] Sandoval, 170.
[10] Ibid., 176.
[11] Ibid.

The cost overruns bankrupted the Western Pacific Railroad, and in 1867, the Central Pacific assumed control of their beleaguered upstart competitor and finished the work through Niles Canyon. In 1868, the Central Pacific also acquired the Alameda & Hayward Railroad. This move secured a direct link between the old Western Pacific alignment through Niles Canyon and Cohen's Wharf in Alameda. By the end of 1869, the Western Pacific (now a subsidiary of the Central Pacific) built tracks from the mouth of Niles Canyon to Hayward, allowing the first Transcontinental Railroad cars to reach Alameda on September 6, 1869.[12]

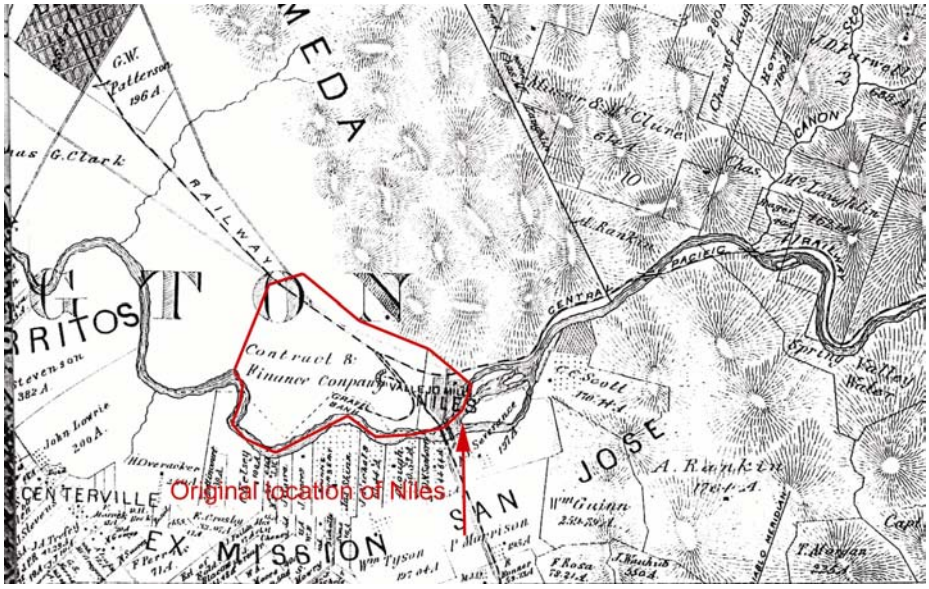

Figure 14. Detail from map of Washington Township, showing original location of Niles and other Central Pacific lands purchased from Jonas G. Clark in the vicinity. Map from Thompson & West's *Official and Historical Atlas of Alameda County*, 1878.

E. Founding of Niles

The Central Pacific was both a railroad and a significant real estate investor, and consequently, the company maintained a general policy of not building stations in established towns. Bypassing existing communities allowed the Central Pacific to profit heavily from land sales and development in the vicinity of the company's new depots. In June 1870, the Contract & Finance Company—the real estate and construction arm of the Central Pacific—purchased two hundred acres from local land baron Jonas G. Clark encompassing most of what is now the Niles district of Fremont **(Figure 14)**.[13] The Contract & Finance Company then laid out a new town and named it Niles in honor of Judge

[12] Basin Research Associates, 6.
[13] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Deed of Real Property Transfer, June 14, 1870, Book 55, page 342.

Addison C. Niles, a major stockholder in the Central Pacific.[14] Located east of the present-day Niles District, the original town plat was located at the mouth of Niles Canyon near Vallejo's Mill. Early maps depict a tiny settlement composed of only two blocks on either side of a lane called Vallejo Street **(Figure 15)**.

Unlike its neighbor to the north, Decoto, also established by the Central Pacific in 1870, Niles did not gain much in the way of residential or commercial development. In fact, eight years after its founding, Thompson & West's *Atlas of Alameda County* concluded that Niles had not yet "…become a town of considerable size and importance…" and that it did not "…have much to boast of in terms of population or business activity."[15] The 1880 Census reported only 100 residents in and around Niles. Meeting with little success in selling the small lots for houses or businesses, the Contract & Finance Company decided to lease most of the original Niles town site for agricultural use.[16]

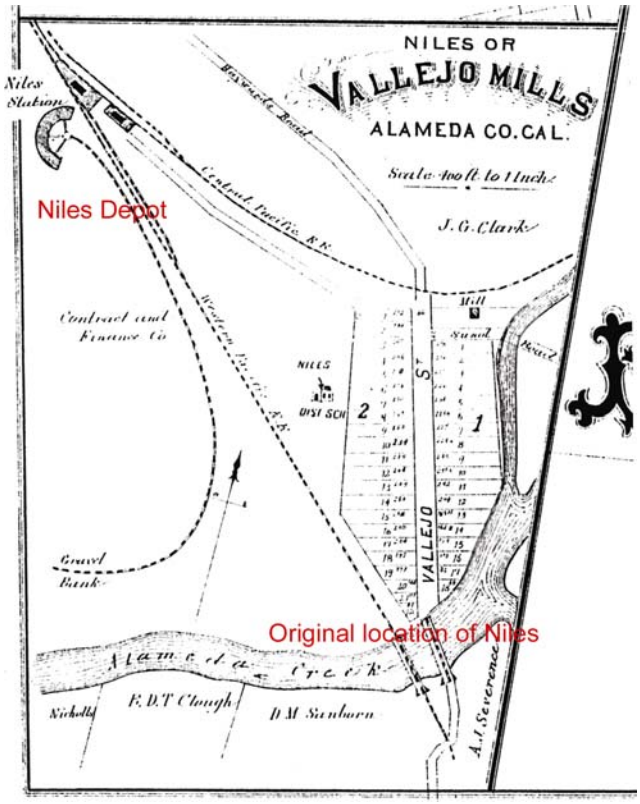

Figure 15. Detail map of Vallejo Mills (Niles).
Map from Thompson & West's *Official and Historical Atlas of Alameda County*, 1878.

Nevertheless, Niles did attract a core of American-born settlers who established stores, hotels, churches and other businesses suitable for a small railroad settlement. Some of these early businesses included William Snyder's general merchandise shop, A. F. Scott's lumberyard and warehouse, L. M. Hinckley's blacksmith shop and W. B. King's "railroad restaurant." In 1872, a $12,000 bridge was

[14] Country Club of Washington Township Research Committee, *History of Washington Township* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1950), 137.
[15] Thompson & West, Official and Historical Atlas of Alameda County, Oakland, CA (Reprinted by Valley Publishers, Fresno, 1976).
[16] Joseph E. Baker, *Past and Present of Alameda County* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), 447.

constructed over Alameda Creek near Niles, facilitating access to Mission San José and Irvington.[17] The first post office was established in 1873 and the first public school was built in 1875.[18]

Niles Moved

In 1884, Vallejo's Mill closed, resulting in dwindling activity in the tiny town of Niles. Marooned a quarter mile from Niles Station and located in a flood-prone plain, the site originally chosen by the Central Pacific was looking less promising by the day. Meanwhile, during the 1880s, building activity began occuring south of the tracks leading into Niles Station, along what is now Niles Boulevard. Hotels, saloons, and boarding houses built across from the station served not only passengers and railroad workers, but also the agricultural laborers working in the surrounding nurseries and orchards.

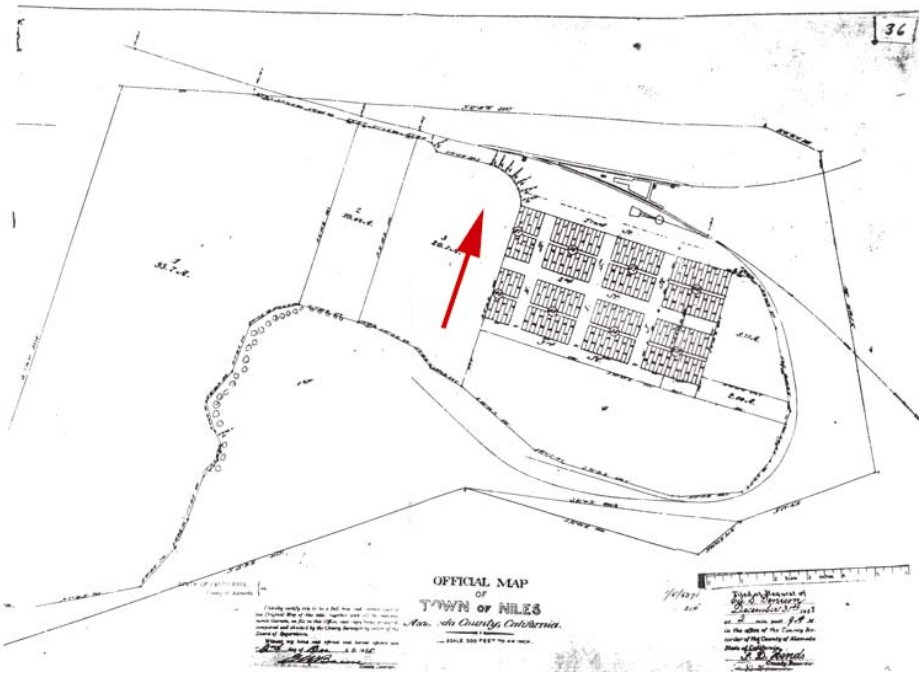

Figure 16. 1888 map of Niles with arrow indicating location of the Office of Dr. Grau. Map on file with Alameda County Department of Public Works

Recognizing the shift in economic activity, the Southern Pacific Railroad, the successor to the Central Pacific, sold the original town site of Niles to the Spring Valley Water Company of San Francisco and laid out a new town south of Niles Station in 1888. Encompassing most of the two-hundred-acre parcel originally purchased by the Central Pacific from Jonas Clark in 1870, the tract consisted of six large parcels, ranging in size from two to ninety-three acres, and a small, six-block village. The "new"

[17] Country Club of Washington Township, 145.
[18] *The Official Historical Atlas Map of Alameda County, California* (Oakland: Thompson & West, 1878), 27.

Niles consisted of three streets running east-west (from north to south: Front, Second and Third Streets) and three running north-south (from west to east: "H," "I" and "J" Streets). The 1888 map indicates that the site of the future Office of Dr. Grau was located on the twenty-acre Parcel 3, just west of the newly platted town **(Figure 16)**.[19]

Throughout the 1890s, Niles finally began to prosper and grow with the addition of dozens of new cottages, businesses, churches and industries. In 1888, a town hall was built for social events and other public gatherings. In 1897, the first edition of the *Niles Herald* was published.[20] The local economy was based largely on horticulture (particularly orchards and nurseries), extractive industries such as gravel mining and railroad work. An 1891 newspaper article commented on the growth of the town and the impressive railroad station. The article described the depot itself as "quite a pretentious building" and the station improvements as being "…more extensive and substantial in nature than at any other station in the valley."[21] The 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map, the first to cover Niles, shows the town still largely confined to the 1888 grid, with a handful of hotels, saloons and livery stables located on Front Street across from Niles Station. The rest of the town was approximately sixty percent developed, mostly with small one-story cottages.

F. Niles: 1900-1956

After 1900, Niles grew at the most rapid pace in its history, with the village achieving a population of 1,400 by 1914. Much of this growth was spurred by the construction of two new rail lines through Niles between 1909 and 1910. The first was built by a new incarnation of the Western Pacific Railroad between Decoto (Union City) and Tracy via Niles Canyon. The second was built by the Southern Pacific between Niles and Redwood City. The construction of these two lines and attendant infrastructure, including a new Western Pacific station south of town, attracted hundreds of railroad workers to Niles. Furthermore, they improved access from Niles to the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Between the 1906 Earthquake and the First World War, Niles' 1888 plan was enlarged several times with several additions. The site of the future Office of Dr. Grau was annexed to Niles in 1909 as part of a new residential subdivision called "Mary E. Mortimer's Addition to Niles." The subdivision map indicates that the future site of the Office of Dr. Grau consisted of two

[19] "Official Map of Town of Niles, Alameda County, California," surveyed December 31, 1888. Map on file at the Alameda County Department of Public Works.
[20] Country Club of Washington Township, 145.
[21] Basin Research Associates, 4.

25' x 149' lots on "Block F" **(Figure 17)**.[22] The 1898 and 1907 Sanborn maps do not show the property, indicating that they remained undeveloped as late as 1909.

Much of Niles' prosperity during the first two decades of the twentieth century can be attributed to two industries: horticulture and moviemaking. Successful nurseries such as the California Nursery and the Shinn Nursery exported fruit trees and ornamentals all over the United States, Mexico, Central America and Asia. In 1912, Niles briefly became an important center of movie-making in the United States when Essanay Studios of Chicago set up operations in Niles to take advantage of the town's varied scenery, good weather and rustic "Old Western" downtown. For the next several years, the studio cranked out hundreds of "Broncho Billy" Westerns as well as several films starring Charlie Chaplin, including his famous film, "The Tramp."

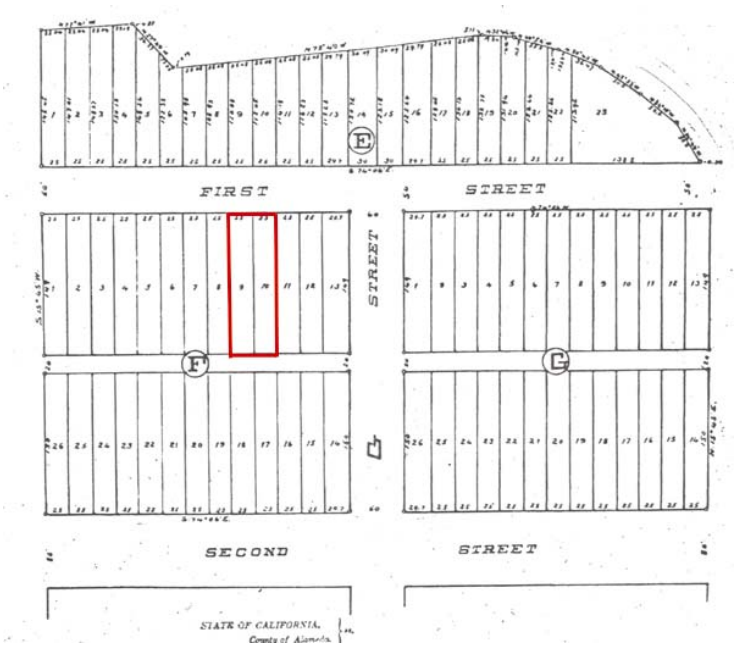

Figure 17. 1908 subdivision map for "Mary Mortimer's Addition," showing future location of the office of Dr. Grau. Map on file with Alameda County Department of Public Works

In 1913, Essanay built a large movie studio on the south side of First Street (now Niles Boulevard) on a parcel assembled out of approximately eight lots in Block "F" of the Mary E. Mortimer Addition, including Lots 9 and 10, the location of the future Office of Dr. Grau. The studio complex was a sprawling one-story concrete structure designed in a utilitarian mode with a

Figure 18. Essanay Studios in Niles, ca. 1913

[22] "Map of Subdivision of Blocks E, F, & G—Mary E. Mortimer Addition to Niles," surveyed September 1908 by A.B. Southard & Co. Map on file at the Alameda County Department of Public Works.

large sign reading "Essanay Film Manufacturing Co." on the front façade **(Figure 18)**. Essanay also built a row of eight identical Craftsman bungalows on Second Street and two on "G" Street.[23] In addition, in 1913, the Edison Company built a 400-seat theater for screening Essanay films in Niles.

Buoyed by enthusiasm over the town's prosperity, the Niles Chamber of Commerce built a sign on the hill overlooking the town that read "Watch Niles Grow." Niles even began making plans to incorporate as a city. Niles' dreams of becoming the Hollywood of Northern California ended precipitously on February 16, 1916 when Chicago-based Essanay studio chief George K. Spoor directed his business partner and actor, Gilbert "Broncho Billy" Anderson, to immediately cease work at Niles and move all the company's filming operations to Hollywood.[24] With Essanay's swift departure, Niles abandoned its plans to incorporate and lapsed back into a semi-pastoral slumber.

From the end of the First World War to the beginning of the Second World War, Niles grew at a much slower pace, although it continued to add substantial businesses. In 1917, George Roeding of Fresno purchased the California Nursery and began expanding the 486-acre operation. In 1923, Shuckl Cannery opened on a triangular parcel of land bounded by a Southern Pacific spur and State Highway 5 (now Mission Boulevard). Other businesses that opened in the 1920s included Kimber Poultry Company in 1925 and Kraftile Company in 1926. Gravel mining along the banks of Alameda Creek increased in importance as well. By 1930, the population of Niles reached 2,000.

The Stock Market Crash and ensuing Depression affected Niles and the rest of southern Alameda County, although not as hard as many other parts of the country. The Dust Bowl and mass displacement of sharecroppers caused an exodus of thousands of people from Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas to California. Many found their way to Niles, joining the already diverse community of Portuguese, Mexican, Chinese and native-born American residents. The completion of California Highway 17 between Oakland and Santa Cruz in 1935 opened up southern Alameda County to high-speed vehicular traffic for the first time and created the potential for suburban development. Increasing vehicular traffic in Niles led to the construction of the Mission Boulevard Bypass around Niles. Six grade separation structures were built to segregate rail and automotive traffic. The project resulted in the demolition of a bridge that previously brought vehicular traffic directly into downtown Niles.

[23] Sandoval, 230-1.
[24] Ibid.

Fears of U.S. involvement in the Second World War led to rapid changes in the Bay Area in the 1930s and early 1940s. The region's strategic location and abundant natural resources led to the establishment of military bases and defense industries, both of which attracted thousands of migrants to California. With its good rail connections and abundant open land, Niles and the rest of Washington Township successfully attracted industries such as the Pacific States Steel Corporation, which built a massive steel mill on Alvarado-Niles Road in 1938. Meanwhile, demand for gravel for military base construction and road building led to the expansion of gravel quarries on the banks of Alameda Creek.

Washington Township's population boomed in the years following the conclusion of the Second World War. The Bay Area experienced an unprecedented influx of new residents from other states, many of whom had come through the region on their way to fight in the South Pacific. This in-migration, coupled with an exodus of residents out of the region's older urban centers of Oakland and San Francisco, caused developers to eye the vast coastal plain of unincorporated Washington Township as a tabula rasa for large-scale housing developments. An aerial photograph dating from 1946 reveals that the subdivisions that would ultimately engulf Washington Township had not yet impinged on Niles.

Figure 19. Aerial view of Niles in 1946, with "Old Niles" in the foreground. Photo courtesy of the Dr. Fisher Collection at the Local History Museum of Fremont

G. Fremont: 1956-2001

Gradually the orchards and fields of Washington Township began to make way for housing tracts, especially around Centerville. By the mid-1950s, some citizens of Washington Township were growing increasingly concerned that out-of-control growth would ruin their traditional rural way of life. Others wished to take a more active role in its development. Both parties agreed that because Washington Township was an unincorporated district administered by the Alameda County Board of

Supervisors, local residents had little say in their own destiny. Desire for home rule, coupled with an attempt by Hayward to annex part of the township, compelled residents of Niles, Mission San José, Centerville, Irvington, Warm Springs and adjoining rural areas to vote in favor of incorporation, creating the City of Fremont on January 10, 1956.[25] Newark opted out to become an independent city in 1955 and Decoto joined Alvarado to form the Union City in 1959.[26]

Despite initial attempts to preserve the new city's agricultural economy and rural way of life, the period from 1956 to the present has been largely characterized by continued residential, commercial and industrial growth. Recognizing that growth was inevitable, the first Fremont General Plan of 1956 attempted to confine residential development to the central part of the city, around Centerville. Nevertheless, through the 1960s and 1970s, residential subdivisions spread beyond this zone to the north, south and east, engulfing the existing villages of Mission San José, Irvington and eventually Niles and Warm Springs.

By the late 1960s, Niles had become a backwater within the sprawling city of Fremont. Increasingly cut off physically and socially from the rest of the predominantly suburban, middle-class city, Niles also saw many of its jobs dry up as orchards were ripped out for housing tracts, quarries abandoned and other industries such as canning and steel-making reduced in scale. Despite sporadic attempts by the City to address declining living standards and deterioration in Niles, by 1967, a study conducted by the Fremont-Newark-Union City Economic Opportunity Agency found the village to be a "pocket of poverty," characterized by low incomes and lack of English proficiency and substandard housing.[27]

H. Dr. Eugene Grau and Ethel Valencia Grau

Dr. Eugene Grau and his wife, Ethel Valencia Grau, moved to Niles around 1930.[28] Eugene was born ca. 1901 in North Platte, Nebraska and had three brothers: Leonard, Herbert, and Will. He received his medical degree at the University of Nebraska. Ethel was born in Oakland on April 21, 1905. Her parents, Manuel Valencia, Jr. and Mabel Eadon, were both artists, and raised a family of nine children. Ethel's uncle was General Gabriel Valencia, the administrator at the Presidio. The Valencia family was descended from one of the oldest Spanish families in Northern California and

[25] Sandoval, 280.
[26] Ibid., 279.
[27] "Poverty Surveyed in Old Niles Area," *Daily Review*, 18 August 1967.
[28] Jan Shannon, "Mrs. Ethel Grau Calls Her Art An 'Avocation,'" n.p., 23 May 1965. Fremont Public Library, Local History files (indexed under Grau).

Valencia Street in San Francisco was named for them.[29] Ethel studied art at several institutions including the California School of Fine Arts, the California College of Arts and Crafts, and San José State College.

In 1925, Dr. Grau moved to San Francisco, presumably to work at San Francisco Hospital as the house officer, where he met Ethel, who was working there as a nurse. The Graus were married on May 27, 1927 **(Figure 20)**. After their wedding, the Graus moved to Scotia, in Humboldt County, where Dr. Grau worked in private practice.[30] Around 1930, the Graus moved to Niles, possibly to find better economic opportunities during the Depression. They had one daughter, Elizabeth (Betty).

Upon arriving in Niles, Dr. Grau opened an office at 155 "G" Street (originally 29 "G" Street), between First and Second Streets, in Niles. They purchased the property (Lots 14, 15 and 16 of Block "F" of the Mary E. Mortimer Addition to Niles) from Charles H. and Patricia V. Law in January 1931.[31] The Graus also lived on "G" Street.[32] Dr. Grau's first office in Niles had been built between 1920 and 1929 on a site previously occupied by two bungalows built by Essanay to house their actors. The 1929 Sanborn map shows the office on "G" Street, labeled as "emergency hospital," located behind the vacant Essanay studio. The Essanay building itself also had a small doctor's office on the corner of "G" Street and 1st Street in 1929; it is unclear if Grau occupied both offices. In 1933, the Essanay studio was demolished by Ed Rose of Niles.[33]


Impromptu Wedding Foils Kidnaping Plot of Friends

Dr. and Mrs. Eugene C. Grau

Miss Ethel Valencia, of Old San Francisco Family, Becomes Bride of Dr. Eugene C. Grau

Figure 20. Wedding announcement for Ethel Valencia and Dr. Eugene C. Grau, in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 26, 1927)

As learned and cultured professionals, Eugene and Ethel Grau quickly became prominent members of Niles society and engaged civic leaders. Their activities were often featured in the local newspaper, the *Township Register*. Dr. Grau was a member of several organizations including the F & AM Lodge of Ferndale, Washington Township Post 195 of the American Legion, the Niles

[29] "Impromptu Wedding Foils Kidnaping [sic] Plot of Friends," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 May 1927.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Grant Deed from Charles H. and Patricia V. Law to Eugene C. and Ethel V. Grau, recorded January 6, 1931 in Book 2478, page 395.
[32] Rosemary McDonald, "Niles Locals," *Township Register* (Niles, California), 7 November 1941.
[33] Sandoval, 232.

Rotary Club, the University of California Art Council, the Stanford Alumni Association, and the Alameda-Contra Costa County Medical Society.[34] Ethel became a well-known local artist specializing in watercolors; she displayed her work nationally with exhibits at venues including the Oakland Museum, the San Francisco Art Association, and the M.H. DeYoung Museum. In 1938, Ethel created the design for the first airmail stamp depicting Niles.[35] She was later a founder of the Hayward Art Association and a member of the Fremont architectural review board. Ethel also worked as an art dealer in Los Angeles, and held the position of art consultant for the Kraftile Co. in Fremont, where she designed structural tile.[36]

When Dr. Grau moved to Niles, there were few doctors in the area. The nearest hospitals were in Oakland and San Jose. Niles had a small maternity facility run by the Silva family, but that closed in the early 1930s.[37] Since the hospitals were far away, patients were heavily reliant on local doctors for a range of medical services. In 1938, the Pacific States Steel mill opened between Niles and Decoto (the site is now in Union City) and Dr. Grau became the company doctor. By 1941, two other doctors, Dr. Lyle H. Buehler and Dr. E.C. Dawson, had opened practices in Niles in an office located at 131 I Street.[38]

Grau Residence

In late 1939 or early 1940, Dr. Grau and his wife approached prominent architect William Wurster to design a new house for them **(Figure 21)**. Although there is no paper trail that reveals why the Graus hired Wurster, it is likely the Graus met him through their friends, the Roedings, who owned the California Nursery in Niles. Mrs. Roeding and

Figure 21. Grau Residence, School Street, Niles

[34] "Dr. Grau Dies, Private Service Planned Today," *News-Register* (Fremont, California), 2 March 1971.
[35] The Country Club of Washington Township Research Committee, comp., *History of Washington Township* ([Stanford, California]: Stanford University Press, 1965), 155.
[36] Jan Shannon, "Mrs. Ethel Grau Calls Her Art An 'Avocation,'" n.p., 23 May 1965. Fremont Public Library, Local History files (indexed under Grau).
[37] Interview with Phil Holmes and Jill Singleton, Fremont, 6 January 2005.
[38] Advertisement in *Township Register* (Niles), 21 November 1941.

Mrs. Grau often painted together and Dr. Grau was the Roeding family doctor. During the mid-1930s, Bruce Roeding's aunt purchased a home near Santa Cruz in the Pasatiempo golf resort development, which was designed by William Wurster and landscape architect Thomas Church.[39] Wurster may have also come in contact with Dr. Grau when he was working on designs for the Children's Hospital of the East Bay in Oakland in 1940; at that time, patients either had to go to Oakland or San Jose to go to the hospital and Dr. Grau likely had connections there.

The Graus purchased an approximately seven-acre lot from Joseph C. and Florence M. Shinn, descendents of the locally prominent pioneer Shinn family, on July 16, 1940.[40] The tract was in a largely undeveloped area of Niles on the site of an abandoned gravel pit. Ethel Grau was attracted to the site because she felt its location near Alameda Creek would inspire her artwork. The Graus asked Wurster to design a house costing about $9,000 and were anxious to start the project as soon as possible to avoid cost increases resulting from rearmament prior to American involvement in the Second World War. Wurster began making sketches of the house in July 1940. The original cost estimates from contractor E. E. Dias came in at $9,613.47. While the house was under construction, the Graus landscaped the site by partially filling the gravel pit to create a lake, which they stocked with fish, French frogs, and ducks.[41] The Graus and their daughter Betty moved into their newly completed house on October 30, 1941. The local newspaper referred to the new Grau residence as the "big new stucco home on [the Graus'] 'fish and game preserve.'"[42] Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Grau advertised for a "Girl" to help with general housework in her new home.[43] By January 1942, the cost of the house (without architectural fees) had risen to almost $12,000, with architectural fees costing an additional $1,175.

Dr. E.C. Grau Office

Even before the new Grau residence was underway, Dr. Grau asked William Wurster to design a new medical office and emergency clinic for his practice in January 1940.[44] In January 1941, after the Graus purchased Lots 9 & 10 of Block "F" from Frank Martinelli, Wurster began designing the office.[45] The final drawings were completed in May 1941. An agreement between the Graus and local

[39] Phone interview with Bruce Roeding, 13 January 2005.
[40] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Grant Deed from Joseph C. and Florence M. Shinn to Eugene C. and Ethel V. Grau, recorded July 16, 1940 in Book 3958, page 113.
[41] "Gravel Pit Inspires Artist," n.p. Fremont Public Library, Local History files (indexed under Grau).
[42] Rosemary McDonald, "Niles Locals," *Township Register* (Niles, California), 7 November 1941.
[43] *Township Register* (Niles, California), 21 November 1941.
[44] Note dated 8 January 1940, located in folder "Grau, Eugene C., 1942, Niles" #4051 III.270, UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives, Berkeley, California.
[45] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Grant Deed from Frank Martinelli to Eugene C. and Ethel V. Grau, recorded January 9, 1941 in Book 3982, page 393.

contractor E.E. Dias (who also built the Grau house) was signed in June 1941. The cost of the building, not including architect's fees, was $10,170.75. This contract included omitting some detailing to save about $550. In September 1941, Wurster suggested a painting scheme for the office including exterior and interior finishes, indicating that the building was nearly completion.[46]

Grau's completed clinic was about 1,700 square feet. Similar to the Grau residence, the office was a stucco-clad wood-frame structure on top of a concrete foundation, with a tar and gravel roof and plaster walls and ceilings. Wurster's choice of stucco for both the Grau residence and the office was unusual. He rarely used stucco, not only because it had maintenance problems, but also because it was an imitative material.[47] During an interview conducted in 1964, Wurster talked about his use of stucco:

> I did some stucco houses too, though. Stucco as it *was* done was an imitation of adobe, you see, and it was rough, with rounded corners, and plaster was used to make believe the walls were this thick, when they really were hollow. This is the thing that got me down. Now when I do plaster I do it so that it looks like what it is.[48]

Wurster may have used Grau's office as a testing ground for stucco, because the plaster was not thickly applied and the corners were left square, leaving little doubt that this was a wood-frame building. A few years later, Wurster also used stucco on one of his buildings for the Schuckl Cannery in Niles. Another possibility for Wurster's choice to use stucco in Niles is that he thought it would compliment the other commercial buildings in downtown Niles, which were mainly clad in stucco.

Theodore Bernardi, Wurster's future partner, described Grau's clinic for a proposed article in *Medical Economics*. Bernardi stated that the building was designed to be economical and simple:

> No attempt was made to introduce decorative features, except as inherent to the elements necessary to the functioning,—such as the large windows in various rooms which, in addition to giving necessary light, give a sense of greater space to basically small rooms.

---

[46] Correspondence between Eugene Grau and William Wurster, located in folder "Grau, Eugene C., 1942, Niles" #4051 III.270, UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives, Berkeley, California.
[47] Marc Treib, ed., *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995), 44.
[48] Quoted in Treib, 80.

When asked what type of architecture the office represented, Bernardi responded: "As the building was conceived in the simplest terms, without any applied ornament or forms suggestive of past styles, we suppose the word is 'modern' although we generally dislike the use of any label." [49]

Dr. Grau moved into his new clinic on November 17, 1941, just a few weeks after moving into his new house. The *Township Register* reported on the move:

> The fine new streamlined emergency hospital and office just completed by Contractor E.E. Dias for Dr. E.C. Grau at the west end of Niles main street was out-fitted with the doctor's equipment on Saturday and Sunday, and opened for business Monday morning…The modern facilities of the new hospital will prove to be an asset to residents of Southern Alameda County.[50]

Grau advertised in the same edition of the newspaper at his new address at 815 First Street. The new clinic was likely the first hospital in the region.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and other American positions throughout the Pacific and the United States found itself at war. Life in Niles changed immediately. Dr. and Mrs. Grau began organizing to create emergency hospitals in case of air raids. The December 16, 1941 edition of the *Township Register* underlined the changes that came to Niles in wartime: "Mrs. Grau cancelled the Arts and Crafts club meeting to be held at her home so she could concentrate on nursing and first-aid training…Under the guidance of Dr. and Mrs. Grau, the town of Niles chose the Legion Hall to be used as the central emergency hospital."[51]

According to Wurster's office records, it took some time for him to collect his fees from Dr. Grau. In May 1942, Wurster wrote to Dr. Grau asking him to pay off the balance of $889.12 in architect's fees, arguing that it was "a difficult time for architects and all work except defense has come to a halt."[52] Wurster wrote Grau again in June and August, but Grau did not reply until August 12, 1942 to say he hadn't paid because the work was still unfinished and there were problems at the office and his house, including flooding at both buildings. On September 19, 1942, Wurster wrote again to ask for payment, telling Grau that the account should be closed since "as you know the house percentage did not come out well financially for me—and I gave you the advantage of savings on the office."

---

[49] Theodore Bernardi to Dr. E.C. Grau, 4 December 1946, "Grau, 1940" (III.269) folder, UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives.
[50] "Dr Grau's Clinic Opened Monday," *Townships Register* (Niles, California), 21 November 1941.
[51] "Meetings Cancelled…or Changed"; "Doctors, Nurses Busy at Work for Emergencies"; "Legion Post Authorizes Forming Disaster Council," *Township Register* (Niles, California), 16 December 1941.

Wurster also mentioned that he was planning to close his office in January 1943 since civilian work was likely finished until the war ended. After the problems at the house and office were resolved, Grau sent his check to Wurster on September 22, 1942, shortly before Grau left to join the army. Wurster responded on September 30, 1942 that he was closing the office on January 1 and enrolling at Harvard for post-graduate work. Wurster commented to Grau regarding the house and office: "You are fortunate to have had this work done for I think all civilian work is over now for the duration."[53]

In September 1942, Grau signed up as a Captain in the Army Medical Corps. Dr. Grau left his new office and clinic in the hands of Dr. E.M. Grimmer, a doctor in Irvington. Grimmer also took over Grau's duties as company doctor for the Pacific States Steel plant. The newspaper reported: "The community will miss Dr. Grau who has been active in civic, service and lodge activities and wishes him success in his new duties."[54] Dr. Grau was first sent to Fort Douglas in Utah and then stationed in Europe for fourteen months, after which he was sent to Kentucky.[55] After the war, Dr. Grau returned to practice in Niles. The war was apparently hard on Dr. Grau; his young patients gave him the nickname "the Butcher" because they were afraid he would cut off their limbs.[56] In 1948, a group of medical professionals formed the Washington Township Healthcare District to provide comprehensive care to area residents. The Washington Hospital Medical Staff organized in 1953, and Dr. Grau was part of the original group of doctors to rotate "on call."[57] The hospital was built in 1958, and became the first major hospital in the new city of Fremont.

Dr. Grau continued his practice through the mid-1960s. In October 1965, the City of Fremont purchased the Grau house and its 3.77-acre lot for $76,000 to be used as a community center. The estate was to anchor a planned 129-acre park centered on the artificial lakes formed by quarrying activities. The local newspaper described the "Grau Estate" as a "historic home" with "extraordinary architectural splendor": "The [Grau] home is outstanding architecturally not only because its design when constructed was far ahead of the times, but also because of the utility factors built into the

---

[52] William Wurster to Dr. E.C. Grau, 7 May 1942, "Grau, 1940" (III.269) folder, UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives.
[53] William Wurster to Dr. E.C. Grau, 19 September 1942, "Grau, 1940" (III.269) folder, UC Berkeley Environmental Design Archives.
[54] "Dr. E.M. Grimmer Assumes Practice of Dr. E.C. Grau," *Township Register* (Niles, California), 25 September 1942.
[55] "Medical Officer Addresses Rotarians," n.p. Fremont Public Library, Gladys Williamson Collection (indexed under Grau, Dr. E.C.).
[56] Interview with Phil Holmes, Fremont, 6 January 2005.
[57] Oral History Associates, *City of Fremont: The First Thirty Years* ([Fremont, California]: Mission Peak Heritage Foundation, [1989]), 184-185.

design."[58] It is remarkable that the Grau house was considered historic only twenty-five years after its construction. The new community center was dedicated in October 1965. However, the Grau home was never used as a community center but has been leased as a daycare center since its purchase.[59]

After the Graus sold their house, they may have moved to Hayward, where Dr. Grau owned property at the time of his death on March 1, 1971 at the age of seventy.[60] The Graus' daughter, Betty Berger, was living in Pleasant Hill by this time with her son Donald. Ethel Grau sold the Grau clinic to William McGlinchy and his wife Lillian Jean McGlinchy in July 1972.[61] The McGlinchys rented the office to Jim Wilson Realty by January 1975. During the 1970s, the office underwent routine maintenance work on the electrical and heating systems, installation of a new roof and new signage.[62] In 1984, the McGlincheys leased the property to David M. Jacquez and Arthur M. Nimedez.[63] The McGlinchys sold the clinic to the present owner, David Jacquez, in November 1989.[64] Ethel Grau eventually moved into a convalescent home in Concord, where she died on July 26, 1988 at the age of eight-three.[65]

I. William Wilson Wurster

William Wilson Wurster was a leading California architect during the mid-twentieth century. In the 1930s and 1940s, he was hailed as a master of regional design by major national architecture and shelter periodicals. Known primarily for his early residential work, Wurster later branched out to design major civic works such as the Valencia Gardens public housing project in San Francisco's Mission District, the Ghirardelli Square rehabilitation project (along with partners Bernardi and Emmons), Stern Hall at the University of California at Berkeley and the Schuckl Cannery in Sunnyvale. Wurster would also leave a lasting impression on the field of architecture education through his deanships at MIT and the University of California at Berkeley.

Wurster espoused the idea of California living, with its emphasis on casualness and outdoor living. He catered both to wealthy clients and not-so-wealthy clients, rarely turning down a project because

---

[58] Hears McVicar, "Board Forges Grau Plan," *News-Register* (Fremont, California), 19 August 1965.
[59] Interview with Phil Holmes and Jill Singleton, Fremont, 6 January 2005.
[60] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Decree of Distribution of the Estate of Eugene C. Grau, recorded January 19, 1972 in Reel 3046, page 131.
[61] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Grant Deed from Ethel V. Grau to William and Jean McGlinchy, recorded July 19, 1972 in Reel 3184, page 637.
[62] City of Fremont, Office of the Chief Building Officer, building and alteration permits for 37275 Niles Boulevard, various dates.
[63] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Lease Option and Deposit Receipt from William J. and Lillian J. McGlinchey to David M. Jacquez and Arthur M. Nimidez, recorded March 1, 1984.
[64] Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office, Grant Deed from Chicago Title Company to David Jacquez, recorded December 6, 1989, document number 89-329366.

it was too small. His clients were often loyal and returned to him for multiple projects or additions or renovations to an existing Wurster design.[66] His interest in landscape led to a prolific relationship with landscape architect Thomas Church, a pioneer of modern California landscape design. After becoming Dean of the Architecture School at the University of California at Berkeley, Wurster transformed architecture education by integrating the schools of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture into one school, known today as the School of Environmental Design. This education innovation was copied widely and is still in use in major schools today.

William Wurster's influence waned soon after his death in 1971. Wurster's subtle, controlled designs do not have the traditional hallmarks of contemporary architect-designed trophy buildings.[67] Since Wurster believed good design responded to the surrounding environment, his buildings often disappear into the landscape, instead of standing out like a piece of Modernist sculpture. Wurster designed his buildings to be appreciated from the inside out and a glance at the exterior frequently does not reveal Wurster's complex planning and careful siting. In addition, the immense influence of Modernist doctrine during the mid-twentieth century created a perception that Wurster's designs were dated or too firmly wedded to historicism. In fact, Wurster's ideas about space, siting, and outdoor living helped transform the way that Californians experienced their homes.

The Bay Region Tradition

William Wurster was part of the architectural movement known as the Bay Region Tradition. As its name suggests, the Bay Region Tradition was a regional movement centered on the area around San Francisco Bay. The Bay Region Tradition was founded on a body of work by early twentieth-century architects such as Bernard Maybeck, Willis Polk and Julia Morgan. Although the Bay Region Tradition highly influenced Northern California architecture, the majority of buildings constructed in the Bay Area during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were built in nationally popular styles (i.e., Italianate, Colonial Revival), often following the pattern of architecture design across the United States. On the other hand, the architects working in the Bay Region Tradition tended to appeal to a smaller population of often native-born intelligentsia or upper middle class clients.[68]

The Bay Region Tradition is not an architectural style, but is more of an ideology encompassing multiple styles. Throughout the past century various movements labeled as belonging to the Bay

---

[65] "Obituary: Ethel V. Grau," *Fremont Argus* (August 2, 1988).
[66] Treib, ed., *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, 52.
[67] Margaret Crawford, Review of "Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster" (Exhibition at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (September 1996): 328.
[68] Sally Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988), 8.

Region Tradition have emerged and flourished. Bay Region Tradition architects embraced the unique elements of Northern California and its landscape; including steep hillsides, a temperate climate, views of the water and even less attractive characteristics such as the ever-present seismic threats to the area. The buildings were usually small-scale, picturesque, woodsy, redwood-clad houses designed to melt into the landscape. The houses were vernacular and anti-urban, but included quirks that played with space and detailing; for example, a tiny house might have oversized columns on the façade.[69] These houses were related to both the Craftsman bungalow and the California ranch house.

A second generation of Bay Region Tradition architects emerged during 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and included William Wurster, Gardner Dailey, and Joseph Esherick. Early Bay Region Tradition architects were influenced by Shingle Style structures and Craftsman bungalows, but the new generation was also influenced by the Monterey Style, a transitional style spanning the Mexican and Early American periods in the Pueblos of Monterey, Sonoma, Los Angeles and other settlements in California. The revival of the Monterey Style style in the 1930s was a subset of the larger Colonial Revival movement, which became popular in the United States during the Depression as a symbol of nationalism. Many of the typical features of these buildings included wood construction, clapboard and board-and-batten walls, shingle roofs, double-hung wood windows, and long porches on square wood columns. Architects working in the Bay Region Tradition were also heavily influenced by the vernacular wood-frame construction of early Anglo California, in particular the large hay barns that were formally ubiquitous in the state's rural landscape.

Although the new generation of Bay Region Tradition architects looked to historic sources and used natural materials, they were by no means strictly revivalists. These architects incorporated modern ideas about planning, use of interior space, and siting into their designs. Despite this, the Bay Region Tradition architects were largely outside the Modernist mainstream, with its focus on the monolithic International Style and radical machine-age ideas of architects like Le Corbusier. During the mid-twentieth century, debates raged over the merits of high modernism versus regionalists. Influential architect critic Lewis Mumford, in an October 11, 1947 *New Yorker* article, described the Bay Region Tradition as one that didn't play to modernist doctrine, but incorporated modern ideas while keeping the client's needs in mind.[70] But the increasing influence of high-style modernism eventually eroded the legacies of second-generation Bay Region Tradition architects.

---

[69] Woodbridge, 8.

Wurster's Designs

William Wurster was, above all, a regionalist. He turned down commissions outside the Bay Area because he did not think that he understood the living conditions in other regions. Wurster firmly believed that architecture should be designed for a particular area and that a building could not be designed in a void and set down in any landscape. He once said that his buildings were intended to be picture frames, not pictures. Wurster's ideas about good design placed him outside the modernist mainstream.[71] He had a contentious relationship with Modernism. Wurster disliked the use of Modernism as a label, saying "Modern is a point of view not a style."[72] When reflecting upon his early designs in 1945, Wurster stated, "it was sensible to base the design on the kind of life people wanted, and *not* on the basis of theoretical modernism. Few of the people who live in these houses have ever said to themselves, 'This is modern.'"[73] Not surprisingly, high-style Modernist designs occur infrequently in Wurster's portfolio.[74]

Wurster believed in designing houses that his clients would want to live in. Landscape and environment were of primary importance; for example, if the building was located in San Francisco, Wurster worked to capture as much sun as possible; if it was in the hot, sunny Central Valley, he designed the structure to provide plenty of shade. Wurster was one of the first architects to capture the informal, outdoor-living, California ethic that developed during the early twentieth century. His homes were enveloped by the outdoors and Wurster designed buildings to take full advantage of the views. The windows in his buildings were even designed so the sash wouldn't block the views if the occupant was sitting or standing.[75] If a house was sited on a lot with no view of the Bay, Wurster created views of a private garden instead, often in collaboration with noted landscape architect Thomas Church.

Wurster's buildings were simple and minimally detailed. Some common Wurster design characteristics included designing foundations to eliminate grade changes from inside to outside—known as the "Wurster footing"; double-hung windows; redwood siding set flush; and the elimination or simplification of door and window frames.[76] He kept his designs clean to minimize competition with outside views, to create an open, airy space, and in some cases, to keep costs

---

[70] Treib, 59.
[71] R. Thomas Hille, *Inside the Large Small House: The Residential Design Legacy of William W. Wurster* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 6.
[72] Treib, 206.
[73] William Wilson Wurster, "The Twentieth-Century Architect," *Architecture: A Profession and a Career* (Washington, D.C.: AIA Press, 1945); quoted in Treib, 230.
[74] Treib, 44.
[75] Woodbridge, 124.
[76] Ibid., 123-124.

down.[77] Wurster often eliminated expensive carpentry work to save money; for example, he specified wall siding to be butt-joined instead of mitered at the corners. Frank Lloyd Wright famously called Wurster "Redwood Bill" and the "shanty architect" because of his reliance on inexpensive materials and construction methods. But Wurster's willingness to work with any client, no matter the size or cost of the project, made his skills in designing and budgeting even more crucial.

Long a supporter of Wright, Wurster was honored by Wright's barbed criticisms. Donald Emmons explained that Wurster would have been worried if Wright didn't take a few jabs at him every now and then. "Wright wouldn't have bothered to comment on Wurster if he didn't think he was someone to be reckoned with," Emmons said, "He would have just ignored him, which was worse." At the beginning of a lecture Wright gave to the School of Architecture at the University of California in the mid-1950s, the architect responded to Wurster's glowing introduction by snarling, "Three words describe what is wrong with Bay Area architecture: William Wilson Wurster."[78]

Wurster's most innovative designs were completed before 1935, with a few exceptions, and new architects began to eclipse him soon after. Although Wurster continued to improve upon his earlier design principles, he did not invent new ideas. His later partners, Theodore Bernardi and Donn Emmons, influenced his postwar work. Bernardi, in particular, steered the firm into incorporating more modernist details like flat or shed roofs, glass walls, and open plans into new projects.[79] In the 1940s, Wurster entered academia, and his career became focused on architectural education rather than design.

Figure 22. William Wilson Wurster

Wurster Biography

William Wilson Wurster was born in Stockton, California in 1895 **(Figure 22)**. Wurster developed an interest in architecture at a young age, and worked for local architect E.B. Brown during high school. In 1913, he matriculated at the University of California at Berkeley and graduated with a degree in architecture in 1919. After graduating, Wurster went to work for San Francisco architect John Reid, Jr., whose firm specialized in institutional and civic work. At Reid's firm, Wurster worked on designs

[77] Hille, 7.
[78] Gordon Young, "None the Wurster for Ware," Modern in Melbourne 2 Website: http://users.tce.rmit.edu.au/E03159/Mod/Melb/mm2/lect/50_60_70/html/wurster/wu.html

for schools and water-treatment plants. In 1922, Wurster headed to Europe to complete the Grand Tour. He returned in 1923 and moved to New York City where he worked for the firm Delano & Aldrich. In 1924, Wurster moved back to California and opened an office in Berkeley. Two years later, in 1926, Wurster opened his own practice in San Francisco.

Wurster's Early Work

During the early years of his practice, Wurster primarily designed residential buildings. His clients rarely asked him to design commercial or industrial buildings. Wurster's most inventive designs were done in the late 1930s and early 1940s, during which his office designed over 200 houses. Wurster's early designs were influenced by regional, vernacular traditions. Wurster called his dwellings the "Large-Small House": a small house with the features and comfort of a large house. Wurster attempted to solve the problem of the Large-Small House by incorporating outdoor spaces and multi-purpose rooms. The Large-Small House was Wurster's primary focus during the early years of his architectural practice and he relished the challenge of working on projects with small budgets. Shortly after opening his San Francisco office, Wurster made a name for himself with the design of the Gregory farmhouse

Figure 23. Gregory House, Santa Cruz, ca. 1927. Photo from Sally Woodbridge et al, *Bay Area Houses,* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988)

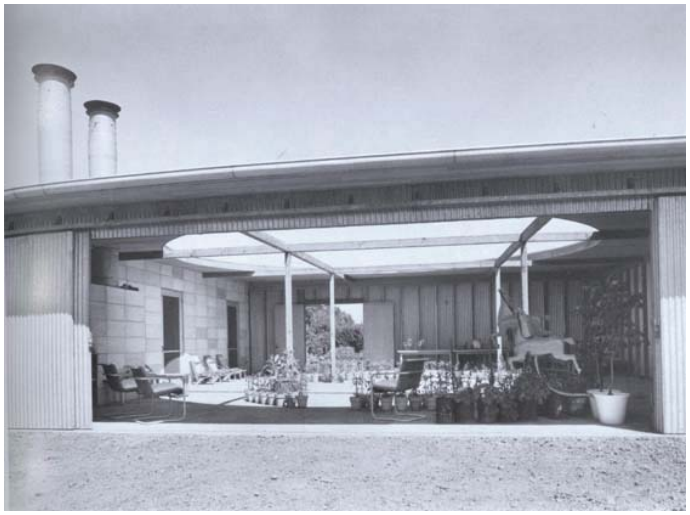

Figure 24. Pope House, Orinda, 1940. Photo from Sally Woodbridge et al, *Bay Area Houses,* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988)

[79] Treib, 210.

in Santa Cruz, completed between 1926 and 1927 **(Figure 23)**. The spare, simple design of the property was featured in several shelter magazines and won the 1931 Small House competition in *House Beautiful.*

Just as Wurster's practice was taking off, the Depression hit. The Depression years were a terrible time for architects, because few clients had the money for an architect-designed building. However, Wurster's practice flourished during the Depression. Wurster was successful because he knew how to attract a range of middle-class clients and he designed buildings that were both modern and traditional. In contrast, architects designing International Style buildings during the Depression were generally in financial straits because banks wouldn't give mortgages to radical new structures in case they wouldn't resell.[80] Wurster also attracted wealthy clients who didn't want to appear ostentatious during the lean years of the Depression. His simple, informal living spaces using traditional, inexpensive materials were an ideal response to a difficult economic time. This dedication to simplicity would continue to inform Wurster's designs long after the Depression ended.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Wurster began experimenting with more Modernist designs. This was likely due to the influence of his future partners, Theodore Bernardi and Donn Emmons, who began working for Wurster in 1934 and 1938, respectively. Although not yet a partner, Bernardi took a leading role in Wurster's office in the late 1930s.[81] One of Wurster's most Modernist houses was the Blaisdell House in Watsonville, a stucco-clad box with a glass-enclosed stairwell completed in 1936. His most successful Modernist design was the Pope House in Orinda, designed in 1940 (later demolished for highway construction) **(Figure 24)**. The Pope House utilized materials that Wurster usually avoided including corrugated metal sheathing, concrete block, and ceramic tile floors. The building's innovative design was so successful that droves of people came to see the house, prompting Dr. Pope to write Wurster and ask him to only send people to look at the house on weekdays.[82] Other Modernist designs of this time period included Valencia Gardens (1943), a federal public housing project in San Francisco, and the Schuckl Cannery (1942) in Sunnyvale called "A classic marriage of Bay Region and International style motifs, and Wurster's masterpiece among his non-residential work."[83]

---

[80] Ibid., 206.
[81] Ibid., 210-211.
[82] Ibid., 52.
[83] David Gebhard, Eric Sandweiss, and Robert Winter, *Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), 183.

Wurster was featured in several major architecture and shelter publications during the 1930s and 1940s. The *Architectural Forum* featured his work in two portfolios in May 1936 and July 1943. The July 1943 retrospective of his work described Wurster as an internationally known architect and "the founder of a school of regional architecture which is easily the best the contemporary movement in this country has produced to date."[84] In 1944, both Valencia Gardens and the Schuckl Cannery were chosen to be part of the "Built in the USA, 1932-1944" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Wurster seemed to be at the peak of his form, but World War II and changes in his personal life would bring Wurster down a different path.

Schuckl & Co.

Wurster's most well known commission in Niles is the Shuckl Cannery **(Figure 25)**. Schuckl & Co. was founded in 1918 in Niles after the company purchased the Ellsworth Packing Company. Schuckl & Co. Plant #1 was built by 1920 at the end of First Street (now Niles Boulevard) to process cherries. The Niles plant was Schuckl & Co.'s first cannery, but they eventually expanded to a second plant in Sunnyvale, on the opposite side of the Bay. In 1942, William Wurster designed a new office building for the Sunnyvale plant. The plant was hailed as a masterpiece of modern office design in a rural setting, and in 1944, Schuckl & Co. approached Wurster about remodeling their Niles plant. Schuckl & Co. wanted to increase the cannery space, modernize their cherry processing, and introduce peach canning into the Niles plant. Due to wartime building restrictions, the project could not be classified as new construction. Accordingly, Wurster retained the boiler house, the warehouse and the concrete base of the cannery so that the project would be classified as a remodel.

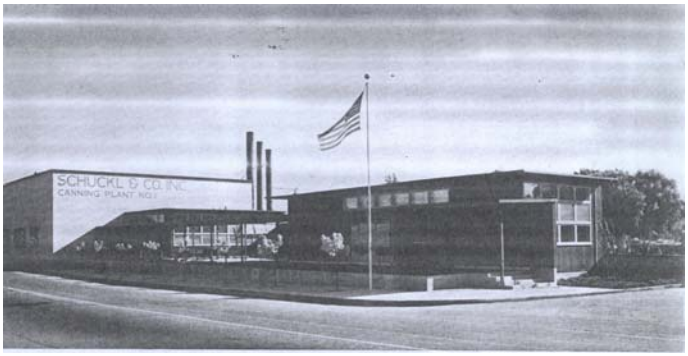

Figure 25. Shuckl & Co. Cannery, Niles.
From *Progressive Architecture* (December 1947)

The Schuckl & Co. Plant #1 project team was made up of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons (Architects), A.V. Saph Jr. (Structural Engineer), and Thomas Church (Landscape Architect)—the same team that had worked on the Sunnyvale plant. The building permit for repairing and extending the existing one-story work area was approved on January 30, 1945. Wurster designed a one-story

[84] "William Wilson Wurster Portfolio," *The Architectural Forum* 79 (July 1943): 45.

wood-frame office wing clad in redwood to accommodate office space, locker room, and restroom facilities. The new plant building was clad in stucco. Construction proceeded quickly, and the Certificate of Occupancy was granted on August 17, 1945.

Wurster and Academia

The 1940s were a period of transition for William Wurster. In 1940, Wurster married Catherine Bauer, a well-known planner and housing advocate; their only child, a daughter named Sadie, was born in 1945. During World War II, architecture work slowed considerably because of the rising cost of materials and the shortage of labor. Wurster did complete some private projects, but most of his designs were for wartime federal projects such as Carquinez Heights and Chabot Terrace defense workers housing projects in Vallejo. The slow-down in work during World War II led Wurster to enroll at Harvard in 1943 to study city planning. In 1944, Wurster accepted the position of Dean of Architecture at MIT, where he remained until 1950, acting in counterpoint to Walter Gropius at Harvard University. While Wurster was at MIT, he left his architectural practice in San Francisco in the hands of Theodore Bernardi. In 1944, Bernardi became a partner in the firm of Wurster & Bernardi. A year later, Donn Emmons became partner after he returned from wartime duty, and in 1945, the firm was renamed Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons.

In 1950, Wurster returned to California to become the Dean of Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley. Wurster was the Chair of the Department of Architecture from 1950 to 1959. During his tenure at the architecture school at Berkeley, Wurster decided that design professionals should be trained in multiple fields, rather than being separated into different schools. Despite some opposition, Wurster successfully combined the schools of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Planning in 1959 to create the College of Environmental Design. He acted as Dean of the College of Environmental Design until 1963, when he retired after being diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Shortly after his retirement, in 1964, Wurster's wife Catherine died in a hiking accident. In 1969, Wurster was awarded the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects. He died on September 20, 1973 at 77.

V. EVALUATION OF HISTORIC STATUS

This section assesses the significance of the Office of Dr. Grau and its potential eligibility for listing in the California Register.

A. California Register of Historical Resources

The *California Register of Historical Resources* is an inventory of significant architectural, archaeological and historical resources in the State of California. Resources can be listed in the California Register through a number of methods. State Historical Landmarks and National Register-eligible properties are automatically listed on the California Register.[85] Properties can also be nominated to the California Register by local governments, private organizations or citizens. This includes properties identified in historical resource surveys with Status Codes of 1 to 5 and resources designated as local landmarks through city or county ordinances. The evaluative criteria used by the California Register for determining eligibility are closely based on those developed for use by the National Park Service for the National Register. In order for a property to be eligible for listing in the California Register, it must be found significant under one or more of the following criteria:

> *Criterion 1 (Event):* Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
>
> *Criterion 2 (Person):* Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.
>
> *Criterion 3 (Architecture):* Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.
>
> *Criterion 4 (Information Potential):* Resources or sites that have yielded or have the potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

The following section examines the eligibility of the Office of Dr. Grau for listing in the California Register.

[85] *National Register*-eligible properties include properties that have been listed on the *National Register*, and properties that have formally been found eligible for listing.

Criterion 1 (Events)

The Office of Dr. Grau appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 (Events) as a structure that is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history." Although the building does not appear to be the earliest emergency clinic in Niles as some have supposed—the 1929 Sanborn map indicates that a building on "G" Street between First and Second Streets was probably the first medical clinic in Niles—the Office of Dr. Grau is the first specially built emergency clinic in the village. The creation of the first emergency medical clinic on "G" Street, a remodeled bungalow converted between 1920 and 1929, marked a shift in the approach to medical care in what was then a remote rural village. Prior to the opening of the clinic, patients who were sick or injured either had to rely on house calls by local physicians, or if their condition was serious enough, make their way to Oakland or San Jose to visit a hospital.

As discussed above, Dr. Grau purchased the clinic in "G" Street in 1930 and ran his practice there until he retained William Wurster in 1941 to build the existing structure. Dr. Grau's decision to build a new emergency clinic in 1941 reflected the need for additional capacity and more up-to-date facilities in the fast-growing communities of Niles and Washington Township. The opening of major industries in the area, including Kraftile and Pacific States Steel, as well as the expansion of railroads in the vicinity of the village, increased the residential population of the area. The dangerous aspects of such work also increased the likelihood of industrial accidents—Dr. Grau also served as the company doctor at the Pacific States Steel Mill—and Niles needed a new state-of-the-art medical facility to respond to the needs of the growing community.

Criterion 2 (Persons)

The Office of Dr. Grau is eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2 (Persons) as a resource "associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history," in this case Dr. Eugene Grau and Ethel Valencia Grau. Dr. Grau was one of the first doctors in Niles and a central figure in the medical community in the Fremont area. He served as company doctor to the Pacific States Steel plant after it opened in 1938, and was one of the pioneer doctors in the Washington Hospital Medical Staff. His wife, Ethel Valencia Grau, was a trained nurse and undoubtedly worked with Grau at his clinic. Ethel was a noted artist and was active in the social scene in the Niles area.

Criterion 3 (Architecture)

The Office of Dr. Grau appears to be eligible under California Register Criterion 3 (Architecture) as a building that "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period," as well as a work that represents "the work of a master." The clinic is an extremely well preserved example of a mid-twentieth-century medical building that embodies the aesthetics of the Bay Region Tradition, with its emphasis on the local landscape and its use of natural materials in a very modern vocabulary. The Office of Dr. Grau is also the "the work of a master," in this case, William Wurster. Wurster was a leader in the regional architect movement known as the Bay Region Tradition during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1969, the American Institute of Architects awarded Wurster with their highest honor, the Gold Medal, shared by only about fifty other architects in the history of the award. The Office of Dr. Grau was designed during a transitional period in Wurster's career, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, when he began experimenting with more modern forms, likely under the influence of his partner, Theodore Bernardi. During the same time period, Wurster was primarily known for his residential work, and consequently the Office of Dr. Grau is an extremely uncommon building in Wurster's body of work. It is worth pointing out that Wurster also designed a home for the Graus in Niles in 1940, and together the two buildings provide an interesting counterpoint of residence versus office, albeit employing a similar design vocabulary.

The building's very simple—some might say plain—design, although it may appear dated today in a new era of conspicuous consumption and flashy display, it is completely in keeping with Wurster's desire to design understated and elegant buildings that avoided ostentatious architectural display. Furthermore, although his work is often criticized for being "dull" or "stripped-down," Wurster's buildings at a closer look reveal a subtle understanding of materials and site that defy initial expectations.

Criterion 4 (Information Potential)

The analysis of the Office of Dr. Grau for eligibility under California Register, Criterion 4 (Information Potential) is beyond the scope of this report.

B. Integrity

In addition to being determined eligible under at least one of the four California Register criteria, properties deemed to be significant must also have sufficient historical integrity. The concept of integrity is essential to identifying the important physical characteristics of historical resources and hence, evaluating adverse change. For the purposes of the California Register, integrity is defined as "the authenticity of an historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of

characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance" (California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 11.5). A property is examined for seven variables or aspects that together comprise integrity. These aspects, which are based closely on those used in evaluating National Register eligibility, are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. *National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* defines these seven characteristics:

- *Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed.
- *Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plans, space, structure and style of the property.
- *Setting* addresses the physical environment of the historic property inclusive of the landscape and spatial relationships of the building(s).
- *Materials* refer to the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form the historic property.
- *Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history.
- *Feeling* is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- *Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

According to the California Office of Historic Preservation's *Technical Assistance Series #6, California Register and National Register: A Comparison:*

> It is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register if it maintains the potential to yield significant or historical information or specific data.

Thus, the California Register may include properties that have suffered a greater degree of damage to their integrity than would be acceptable for listing in the National Register.

Office of Dr. Grau

The Office of Dr. Grau has a very high level of integrity. The building has undergone minor alterations, but largely retains its original plan, fenestration, exterior detailing, and most of its original

interior detailing. The only major intrusions occurred on the east façade, where a door and a pair of windows were inserted when part of the office was turned into an apartment. However, the new fenestration is sympathetic to the original design and is located on a secondary elevation. On the interior, two short walls were installed to create a second apartment in the building, but the changes were minor and are easily reversible. The Office of Dr. Grau retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

VI. CONTEXT & RELATIONSHIP

The Office of Dr. Grau is located on the main commercial strip in Niles, Niles Boulevard, although it is slightly outside the downtown core. Downtown Niles has retained its small-scale, rural feel, and most of the buildings along Niles Boulevard are two-story commercial structures. The area behind the Office of Dr. Grau to the south is largely residential, and many of the small homes in this neighborhood are historic, including the row of Essanay Studio bungalows at the rear of the Grau property. Although most of the other structures in this area are constructed in early twentieth-century styles, the modernist Office of Dr. Grau was designed in a similar scale and use of materials.

VII. EVALUATION OF PROJECT SPECIFIC IMPACTS UNDER CEQA

This section analyzes the project specific impacts of the proposed project on the environment, as required by CEQA.

A. Status of Existing Building as a Historical Resource

A building may qualify as a historic resource if it falls within at least one of four categories listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a). The four categories are:

1) A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4850 et seq.).

2) A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1 (g) of the Public Resources Code, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.

3) Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the

architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852).

4) The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Pub. Resources Code), or identified in an historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in section 5024.1(g) of the Pub. Resources Code) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be an historical resource as defined in Pub. Resources Code sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

In general, a resource that meets any of the four criteria listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a) is considered to be a historical resource unless "the preponderance of evidence demonstrates" that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.[86] Based on our analysis, the Office of Dr. Grau appears to qualify as a historical resource under CEQA.

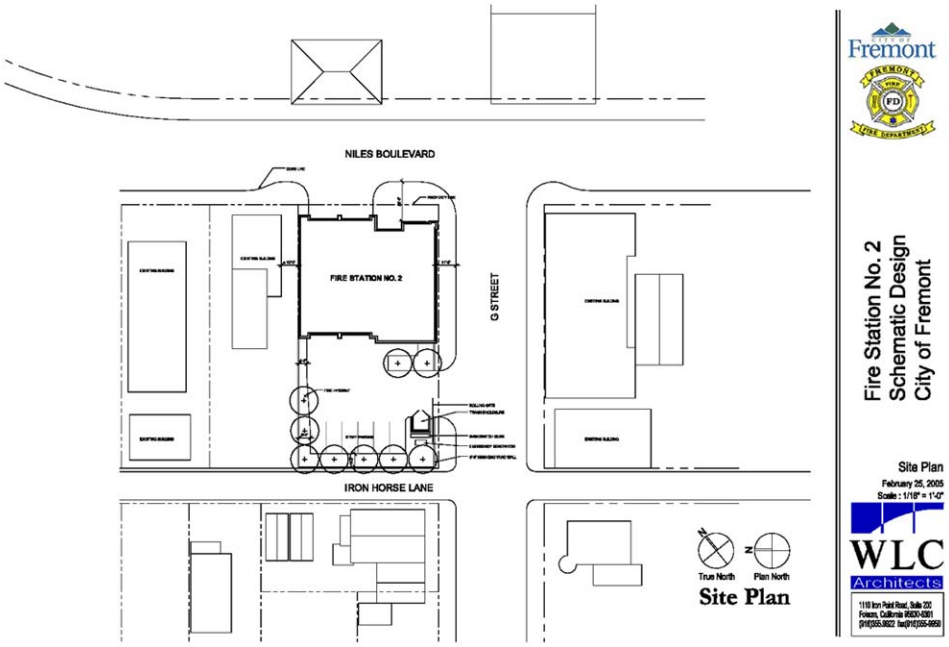

Figure 26. Proposed fire station site plan at 37299 Niles Boulevard. The Office of Dr. Grau is shown just to the left of the proposed fire station. WLC Architects, 2005.

[86] Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4850 et seq.

B. Determination of Significant Adverse Change under CEQA

According to CEQA, a "project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historic resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment."[87] Substantial adverse change is defined as: "physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historic resource would be materially impaired."[88] The significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project "demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance" and that justify or account for its inclusion in, or eligibility for inclusion in, the California Register.[89] Thus, a project may cause a substantial change in a historic resource but still not have a significant adverse effect on the environment as defined by CEQA as long as the impact of the change on the historic resource is determined to be less-than-significant, negligible, neutral or even beneficial.

C. Analysis of Project Specific Impacts under CEQA

The City of Fremont first proposed constructing the new Niles fire station on the site of 37275 Niles Boulevard, thereby resulting in the demolition of the Office of Dr. Grau, a historic resource that appears to be eligible for the California Register. This original proposed project would have caused a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource and therefore may have had a significant effect on the environment. Page & Turnbull offered two alternatives to this proposal that would feasibly realize most of the basic objectives of the project, but that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental effects. The two alternatives were: (1) a No Project Alternative; and (2) a Preservation Alternative. The alternatives are briefly summarized below.

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

In the No Project Alternative, the proposed fire station would be located elsewhere in Niles and the former Office of Dr. Grau would remain in use as a privately owned and operated commercial property. The No Project Alternative would not entail the demolition of the Office of Dr. Grau and therefore would *not* have a significant effect on the environment.

Alternative 2: Preservation Alternative

The Preservation Alternative involves redesigning the proposed fire station without demolishing the Office of Dr. Grau. One option changes the one-story fire station to a two-story structure and places

[87] CEQA Guidelines subsection 15064.5(b) (emphasis added).
[88] CEQA Guidelines subsection 15064.5(b)(1) (emphasis added).
[89] CEQA Guidelines subsection 15064.5(b)(2).

it entirely on the vacant lot to the east of the Office of Dr. Grau at 37299 Niles Boulevard. The second option places the proposed fire station on the vacant lot at 37299 Niles Boulevard and a portion of the property at 37275 Niles Boulevard, on the vacant section of the parcel to the rear of the Office of Dr. Grau. In both options, the former Office of Dr. Grau would remain in use as a privately owned and operated commercial structure, the vacant lot on the corner of Niles Boulevard and G Street would receive a new building, and Niles would acquire a new fire station. Neither option identified within the Preservation Alternative would have a significant effect on the environment.

Proposed Project

After reviewing the options, the choice was made to pursue Alternative 2: Preservation Alternative. The current proposed project entails the construction of a new building adjacent to the Office of Dr. Grau, a historic resource that appears to be eligible for the California Register. The proposed building would be constructed on the vacant lot to the east of the Office of Dr. Grau at 37299 Niles Boulevard **(Figure 26)**. The new building will be located approximately ten feet or more from the east façade of the Office of Dr. Grau, and the lot boundaries between the two parcels will remain unchanged. The proposed building will be a one- and two-story structure with a large open area in the back of the lot surrounded by a 6'-high yard wall; this rear yard will be accessed by a curb cut on "G" Street.

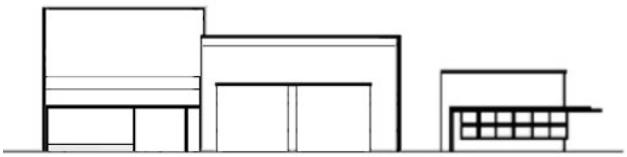

Figure 27. Proposed elevation for the new fire station at 37299 Niles Boulevard. The Office of Dr. Grau is shown at the right. City of Fremont, 2005.

The proposed project will not have a substantial effect on the Office of Dr. Grau. Although the proposed 6'-high yard wall will block views to the east from the Office of Dr. Grau, this is a secondary elevation that originally had very little fenestration. Wurster never intended this to be a significant façade. Although this lot was vacant when the Office of Dr. Grau was constructed, both Wurster and Dr. Grau most likely expected that a building would be constructed on the lot at some point in the future. Consequently, the primary fenestrated areas are on the north and west sides of the building, capturing views of the hills to the north and the plantings on the western property line. The proposed fire station will not block any significant views of the Office of Dr. Grau; nor will it block any major views from the building. The original lot lines and rear parking lot at 37275 Niles Boulevard will also remain intact. Finally, the proposed size, scale, and massing of the fire station will

not have a negative impact on the historic character of the Office of Dr. Grau **(Figure 27)**. Therefore, the proposed project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and consequently, will not have a significant effect on the environment.

D. Analysis of Cumulative Impacts under CEQA

CEQA defines cumulative impacts as follows:

> "Cumulative impacts" refers to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.
>
> (a) The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects.
>
> (b) The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.[90]

The proposed project will not have a significant cumulative impact under CEQA. Although the proposed building will be located adjacent to the historic "Essanay Studio Complex" district, it will not result in the demolition of any historic structures associated with this district. In addition, the proposed fire station will be compatible with the older one- and two-story commercial structures along Niles Boulevard with a similar size, scale, and massing.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Designed and built in 1941, the former Office of Dr. Grau was the first specially built medical building in Niles. In the years preceding American involvement in the Second World War, several major war-related industries came to Niles, increasing the population and the demand for medical care in the area, necessitating the provision of emergency facilities in the village of Niles. The building is also a well-preserved and increasingly rare example of a non-residential commission of well-known Bay Region architect William Wilson Wurster. Designed and constructed right before the War on a shoestring budget for a cultured country doctor, the former emergency hospital embodied much of what interested Wurster. Wurster's no-nonsense aesthetic and affection for commonplace industrially produced materials was right at home in the Dr. Grau commission. Despite its humble

[90] CEQA Guidelines, Article 20, subsection 15355.

nature, the building displays several of Wurster's trademark "big picture" concepts, particularly his use of strategically placed bands of windows to frame the landscape, in effect bringing the outdoors inside. His use of stucco, while unusual for "Redwood Bill," was in part a nod to the building's context as well as a cost-saving use of materials. Based on the analysis within this report, Page & Turnbull believes that the former Office of Dr. Grau appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register on the local level under Criteria 1 (Events), 2 (Persons) and 3 (Design), with a period of significance spanning the years 1941-1965. As such it appears to be a historic resource under CEQA. The proposed project to construct a new fire station on the vacant lot at 37299 Niles Boulevard, which is located adjacent to the Office of Dr. Grau, will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of the Office of Dr. Grau and therefore, will not have a significant effect on the environment.

IX. REFERENCES CITED

Books

Baker, Joseph E. *Past and Present of Alameda County*. Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914.

The Country Club of Washington Township Research Committee, comp. *History of Washington Township*. Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1965.

Hille, R. Thomas. *Inside the Large Small House: The Residential Design Legacy of William W. Wurster*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994.

Oral History Associates. *City of Fremont: The First Thirty Years*. [Fremont, California]: Mission Peak Heritage Foundation, [1989].

John S. Sandoval. *The History of Washington Township*. Fremont, CA: Mt. Eden Historical Publishers, 1985.

Treib, Marc, ed. *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995.

Woodbridge, Sally, ed. *Bay Area Houses*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988.

Articles/Reports

Anspacher, Carolyn. "W.W. Wurster, Architect, Dies." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 September 1973.

Basin Research Associates, *Historic Recordation Report,* "Kraftile, Fremont, California," August 1998.

Crawford, Margaret. Review of "Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster" (Exhibition at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (September 1996): 328-330.

"Dr. Grau Dies, Private Service Planned Today." *News-Register*, 2 March 1971.

"Four Houses in California." *Architectural Forum* 64 (May 1936): 375-402.

"Fremont Dedicates Niles Lakeside Park." *Oakland Tribune*, 11 October 1965.

"Grau Home Dedication Sunday." *News-Register*, 8 October 1965.

"Gravel Pit Inspires Artist." n.p. Fremont Public Library, Local History files (indexed under Grau).

Gregory, Daniel. "The Zen and Sensibility of William Wurster." *Old-House Journal* 28 (September/October 2000): 68-71.

"Impromptu Wedding Foils Kidnaping [sic.] Plot of Friends." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 May 1927, 18.

Kahn, Eve M. "The Modest Modernist." *House Beautiful* 137 (November 1995): 68-71.

McVicar, Hears. "Board Forges Grau Plan." *News-Register* (Fremont, California), 18 August 1965.

"Obituary: Dr. Eugene C. Grau." *Argus* (Fremont, California), 2 March 1971.

"Obituary: Ethel V. Grau." *Argus* (Fremont, California), 2 August 1988.

"Office Building for the Schuckl Canning Co." *Architect and Engineer* 154 (August 1943): 12-17.

"Public and Commercial Structures, Chabot Terrace (FPHA), Vallejo, Calif." *Pencil Points* 25 (October 1944): 79-85.

Shannon, Jan. "Mrs. Ethel Grau Calls Her Art 'An Avocation.'" n.p., 23 May 1965. Fremont Public Library, Local History files (indexed under Grau).

Township Register (Niles, California). 1941-1942; 1953.

"William Wilson Wurster Portfolio." *The Architectural Forum* 79 (July 1943): 45-65.

"William Wurster Is Appointed New Architecture Dean." *The Tech* (MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts), 14 July 1944, 1

Wurster, William. "From Log Cabin to Modern House." *New York Times*, 20 January 1946, Sunday Magazine, 10-11.

Wurster, William W. "San Francisco Bay Portfolio." *Magazine of Art* 37 (December 1944): 300-305.

Public Records

Alameda County Assessor/Recorder's Office

Fremont Building and Safety Division

Archives

Fremont Public Library, Local History and Gladys Williamson Collection files.

William W. Wurster/Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons collection, 1924-1974. Environmental Design Archives, University of California at Berkeley.

X. APPENDIX

Chronology: Dr. Eugene Grau and Ethel Grau

ca. 1900	Eugene Grau born
1905	Edith Valencia (Grau) born
1927	Eugene and Edith Grau married
1930	Graus move to Niles
1933	Essanay Film Manufacturing Company studio (on future Grau Office site) demolished
1940	William Wurster begins designing Grau house and clinic
1941	Graus' house and clinic in Niles completed; Graus move into house on October 30, 1941, open clinic on Nov 17, 1941
1941	Graus begin organizing emergency wartime hospital
1942	Dr. Grau joins army in September 1942; Dr. Grimmer takes over practice at clinic while he is gone
1965	Grau house purchased by town of Niles for community center
1971	Eugene Grau dies
1972	Ethel Grau sells office to William McGlinchy and Lillian Jean McGlinchy
1988	Edith Valencia Grau dies
1989	McGlinchys sell office to David Jacquez, the current owner

Chronology: William Wurster

1895	Wurster born in Stockton, CA
1913	Wurster matriculates at UC Berkeley
1919	Wurster graduates from UC Berkeley with degree in architecture
1919	Wurster starts to work for John Reid, Jr.
1922	Wurster becomes licensed architect
1922	Wurster goes to Europe for Grand Tour
1923	Wurster goes to NYC and works for Delano and Aldrich
1924	Wurster returns to California, opens office in Berkeley
1926	Wurster opens office in San Francisco
1928	Wurster completes Gregory Farmhouse
1934	Theodore Bernardi joins Wurster's office
ca. 1938	Donn Emmons joins Wurster's office
1940	Wurster marries Catherine Bauer
1941	Wurster completes the Grau house and office in Niles
1942	Wurster designs Schuckl Cannery in Sunnyvale
1942	Wurster receives commission for Vallejo war housing
1943	Wurster enrolls at Harvard to study city planning
1943	Wurster designs Valencia Gardens (received commission in 1939)
1944	Wurster becomes Dean of Architecture at MIT
1944	Wurster partners with Theodore Bernardi to form Wurster and Bernardi
1945	Wurster's daughter is born
1945	Donn Emmons becomes partner to form Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons
1945	Wurster designs addition to Schuckl Cannery in Niles
1950	Wurster becomes Dean of Architecture at UC Berkeley
1959	Wurster combines architecture, planning, and landscape architecture schools to form College of Environmental Design
1963	Wurster diagnosed with Parkinson's, retires from UC Berkeley

1964 Catherine Bauer Wurster dies in fall while hiking
1969 Wurster receives the Gold Medal from the AIA
1973 Wurster dies